



# General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

**58**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
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New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## Agenda item 36 (continued)

### Question of Palestine

#### Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/68/35)

#### Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/363)

#### Draft resolutions A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14 and A/68/L.15

**Mr. Yoshikawa** (Japan): The representatives who are here at 10 a.m. sharp are those, I believe, who truly consider the issue of the Middle East and the question of Palestine to be important. I am pleased to participate in the deliberations today, as I was engaged in Middle East affairs in my previous diplomatic assignments. I wish to address agenda items 35 and 36 on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, respectively, together.

Almost a year ago, on the commemorative occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the General Assembly adopted a historic resolution that granted Palestine the status of non-Member observer State at the United Nations (resolution 67/19). In the light of our position supporting a two-State solution, Japan voted in favour of the resolution.

Both parties should now seize the window of opportunity provided by the resumption of direct negotiations in July. In that context, we deeply deplore that, in October and November, the Israeli Government announced plans to approve tenders for the construction of housing units in the West Bank. We would like to call upon both parties not to take unilateral action that could negatively affect the peace process but to continue negotiations in good faith.

Japan believes that helping Palestinians to create a viable economic foundation will contribute to advancing the political process. Given the current delicate phase of direct negotiations, it is all the more important for the international community to work towards the coexistence and prosperity of Palestinians and their neighbours.

From that standpoint, Japan will step up its assistance for Palestinian development. We will continue our two concrete initiatives aimed at mobilizing private sector investment in Palestine. The first is the “Corridor for peace and prosperity” initiative. Its flagship project, the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, aims to transform an area of the Jordan Valley into productive and fertile land, thereby making it possible for Palestinians to export agricultural products. The Agro-Industrial Park’s beneficial economic impact is estimated at more than \$40 million per year, with the possible creation of some 7,000 new jobs. I wish to emphasize that it also provides a significant opportunity for confidence-building among key stakeholders in the region as it involves not only Palestine but also Israel and Jordan.

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The Japanese Government has also supported the project through United Nations agencies. For instance, my Government recently exchanged notes with the United Nations Development Programme on the execution of two projects, one of which supports the construction of an electrical substation to supply electricity to various facilities on the Park's premises. Our contributions to the project now amount to more than \$1 million. The other project helps to develop the management capacity of the Palestinian Industrial Estates and Free Zone Authority, which is the leading Palestinian agency in charge of the Agro-Industrial Park. We will disburse a total of \$400,000 to that end. The park is scheduled to start its operations next year. Already two Palestinian companies have signed contracts with the park's developer. Some 30 companies have shown an interest in joining. We look forward to welcoming private companies in the Middle East and other regions of the world in taking part in the project.

The second Japanese initiative is the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD). Co-hosted by Japan and Palestine, the conference was launched in Tokyo in February this year with the participation of seven countries as well as international organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). It is a process aimed at mobilizing and sharing East Asian economic development experience and resources in support of Palestinian development. As a follow-up, Japan will host a business promotion meeting in Tokyo next week, to which we have invited representatives of the private sector. The meeting will aim at exploring ways to strengthen business relations with Palestine. The outcome of the meeting will be submitted to the second ministerial meeting of CEAPAD, scheduled to be held in Indonesia early next year. We are grateful to Indonesia for its valuable support.

Providing vital assistance to Palestinian refugees to improve their plight has been high on my country's agenda. On 11 November, my Government announced a contribution amounting to \$7.7 million in food aid to UNRWA. That grant will be used for the purchase of wheat flour and other commodities that will be distributed to 300,000 Palestinian refugees living in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. In the same vein, on 21 November Japan exchanged notes with the World Food Programme to provide food aid in the amount of \$4 million to the Palestinian people.

With respect to UNRWA, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of my Government, to my friend, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Filippo Grandi, who will soon be leaving the Agency. I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for his contribution and dedication to UNRWA. I also look forward to working closely with his successor, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl.

The resumption of direct negotiations in July has opened the door to a two-State solution. We are already midway in the agreed nine-month time frame. Japan strongly urges both sides to act to enhance mutual trust and continue to make steady efforts in favour of peace. Japan stands ready to support their endeavours.

**Mr. Moncada** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (A/68/PV.57). We also wish to recognize the laudable work that the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been doing to safeguard initiatives that make it possible to achieve the long-desired recognition of the Palestinian State.

When in 1977 the General Assembly launched a broad appeal to set aside 29 November for the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 32/40 B), a long battle began to keep alive the need for Palestine to become a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations. Recently, on 18 November, we saw how the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Mr. Riyad Mansour, voted for the first time in the United Nations General Assembly, a historical moment that will be part of the memory of the past battles Palestine fought to achieve its permanent liberation. Just a year ago, resolution 67/19 was approved, elevating the status of Palestine at the United Nations. That was a further step towards sovereignty, freedom and independence and full membership in the Organization becoming real. Our Bolivarian Government co-sponsored the resolution and we are proud of it. Nevertheless, although we believe that it was an important step on the road towards recognition, the final objective has not yet been reached.

On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), proposing the creation of two States in the territory of Palestine, an Arab State and a Jewish State. Just days after that resolution

was adopted, a military offensive of territorial and demographic expansion began, with the intention of expelling Palestinians from their lands and preventing their return. That is how the State of Israel was unilaterally proclaimed. On 15 May 1948, the displacement of Palestinians as a result of their eviction from their historical homeland began. But not only was a process of expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their ancestral lands set in motion, but also an process of implantation which was designed to modify the ethnic and cultural composition of the region.

Ironically, that same year, on 10 December 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights was also approved. Let us recall that the Declaration was inspired as a necessary response at the time to the atrocities committed against peoples in the Second World War. Just a few days before the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Palestinian people is still owed the fulfilment of their legitimate ambition to be a State in the international arena. The historical impunity of the occupying Power, Israel, encouraged by the right of veto exercised a permanent member of the Security Council, has made it possible to create a record of murders of generations of Palestinian children, teenagers, men and women who are only asking to live in dignity on their lands.

The proliferation of illegal settlements, the construction of walls and checkpoints, restrictions on the free movement of the Palestinian people, and impediments to basic public services are just some of the many grievances that the Organization has denounced on a daily basis through the reports of the United Nations on the question of Palestine. The right of return of the Palestinian people to their lands cannot be overlooked, nor can the release of hundreds of political prisoners, including children and teenagers, which should be included in the agenda of negotiations.

The occupying Power has practiced State terrorism, violating international law, human rights and international humanitarian law. It has left unfulfilled all resolutions of the United Nations, placing itself outside international law. It has practiced apartheid and ethnic cleansing. It has collectively punished the civilian population, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Palestinian people has a legitimate right to continue seeking dignity and justice and to fulfil their inalienable right to self-determination as an

independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

Our Bolivarian Government has sent a message as part of the celebration of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People that reiterates its rejection of illegal policies applied by the occupying Power, Israel, which ignores the rights of the Palestinian people and aims at the territorial and political disintegration of the State of Palestine. The Government of Venezuela positively welcomes the resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel, which should lead to a firm and lasting peace within which both States can live safely as sovereign and independent countries within internationally recognized borders. A negotiated political solution to the issue is a decisive factor in bringing peace and security to the Middle East and its peoples.

**Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia): Malaysia thanks Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, Permanent Representative of Senegal and Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement. My delegation would also like to thank the Bureau members of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights for its report (A/68/35).

Malaysia would also like to align itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/68/PV.57).

The Government and the people of Malaysia join the international community in observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This event proves resoundingly the legitimacy of the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination, sovereignty and independence. In that regard, my delegation underlines our support for the establishment of a sovereign State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Like many others, we also recall with satisfaction the momentous adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 67/19 on 29 November 2012, which accorded Palestine non-member observer State status at the United Nations. On that historic day, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on the Assembly to “issue a birth certificate to the reality of the State of Palestine” (A/67/PV.44, p. 5). My delegation looks forward to the day when the State of Palestine will be issued with an

identity card — not the one made famous by the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish in his resistance poem of that name, but one that recognizes Palestine as a full-fledged State Member of the Organization.

My delegation commends the Palestinian leadership for its continued courage and sacrifices to foster an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of direct negotiations with the Israeli side. However, it is apparent that their attitude is not matched by that of their negotiating partners. Although the negotiations are supposed to be confidential, the current status on the ground is no secret, with the endless construction of illegal settlements and outposts by Israel on occupied Palestinian territory.

Malaysia condemns Israel's continued building of illegal settlements in Palestinian lands, including in East Jerusalem — an act that we find even more reprehensible at a time when Israel should be committed to the success of the talks. In that regard, my delegation recognizes that the State of Palestine has maintained its commitment to the direct negotiations in spite of the provocations of the occupying Power. We therefore urge the international community to demand that Israel immediately cease its illegal settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, before the possibility of a two-State solution is completely eroded. Responsible Member States must also play their part in ensuring that the internationally accepted parameters of the two-State solution are respected and adhered to by Israel.

Malaysia also reiterates its rejection of other forms of violence committed against the Palestinian people, including violence by Israeli settlers, the illegal construction of the separation wall, the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinians and the exploitation of natural resources in Palestinian lands. What we find particularly alarming is the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza. The people of Gaza have suffered months of food insecurity and now they have to deal with energy shortages as well. Malaysia demands an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza and an end to the illegal and inhumane collective punishment carried out by Israel against the people of Gaza.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Malaysia endorses the Committee's report and its recommendations. My delegation also welcomes the

reactivation of the Committee's Working Group, headed by Malta.

The question of Palestine continues to be a main foreign policy issue in the Asia-Pacific region, despite our apparent geographical distance from the Middle East. In that regard, my delegation was pleased with the convening of the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Beijing in June. We look forward to such events being held as a frequent fixture on the calendar of the Asia-Pacific region, where Malaysia and other likeminded countries would continue to lend our support.

My delegation is also heartened to see such strong backing for the Committee from Latin American States, many of which have long been expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. We supported the appointment of the Plurinational State of Bolivia as a member of the Committee following its application in July. We also recall the significant contribution made by Venezuela, which hosted the Committee's 351st meeting in Caracas on 18 and 19 April this year. Indeed, this is perhaps what makes the question of Palestine so special, in that it reaches into the hearts of people around the world, regardless of their race, religion or nationality. Malaysia supports the noble work done by the Division of Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information in that regard. My delegation is also pleased to co-sponsor all resolutions under this agenda item.

Let me conclude by recalling the message of solidarity sent by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, in conjunction with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which reiterates Malaysia's strong support for the Palestinian cause and readiness to continue working with the international community to bring justice for Palestine, as we have demonstrated over the past 40 years.

**Mr. Eler** (Turkey): I would like to start by extending our warm congratulations once again to the delegation of the State of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people and on the upcoming first anniversary of the historic vote of 29 November 2012 at the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.44).

The question of Palestine continues to lie at the heart of the fundamental challenges we face in the Middle East region, which is going through a period



of transformation and change. The denial of the right of the Palestinians to have a State of their own has no justification on any moral, political or legal grounds. In the absence of an immediate and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, the prospects for regional peace, cooperation and welfare will only remain a distant dream.

Turkey has always supported a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel. Progress on the Middle East peace process and the successful completion of comprehensive peace negotiations between the parties for a just and lasting solution have become increasingly critical against the backdrop of the recent developments in the Middle East region.

For all those reasons, Turkey sincerely welcomed the resumption of direct peace negotiations between the parties in July this year. We commended the Palestinian and Israeli leadership and urged them to finally reach a viable two-State solution. We also expressed our appreciation for the commitment and tireless efforts of the United States Secretary of State and for the keen support of the League of Arab States for the conclusion of the peace negotiations within a nine-month framework. We welcomed the Quartet's expression of its determination to lend effective support to the parties' efforts and its commitment to reach a permanent status agreement within nine months. However, we have also been highlighting the fact that time is an important parameter in this process and that another opportunity for peace and stability in the region should not be missed.

Unfortunately, four months into the negotiations, the lack of progress and continued settlement activity have resulted in frustration on the part of the Palestinian negotiation team and their resignation. The reasons for that frustration should be noted well by the international community. Although we are encouraged by President Abbas' determination to continue the negotiations, even more new settlements were announced over the last few days. If we sincerely wish to achieve peace, parties should act in good faith, build confidence, avoid provocative actions, freeze settlement activities, release prisoners and implement security arrangements for both sides.

I would like to reiterate once again that Turkey is ready, as it has always been, to contribute to

all international efforts towards a just and lasting settlement.

On the other hand, the situation of Palestinian prisoners under Israeli custody, including children and women, remains a source of concern. The international community must be firm in its condemnation and rejection of these and other unacceptable Israeli actions, including restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods, that constitute attempts to artificially change the demographic and multicultural identity of Jerusalem.

We have repeated on so many occasions, in this Hall and various other forums, that the blockade in Gaza is illegal and that all restrictions on Gaza are counterproductive. The full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) is important. The deteriorating economic, social and humanitarian conditions in Gaza as a result of the restrictions adversely affect the already fragile situation in the region.

Turkey has taken urgent action to alleviate some emerging vital shortages, including financial assistance to get fuel for generators used in critical services such as health care, water and sanitation in Gaza. We have also recently urgently dispatched supplies of wheat flour to Gaza, amounting to 10,000 tons, via the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As the Chair of the Working Group of the Financing of UNRWA, I call on the international community to continue and even enhance its support for the work of UNRWA, which is an essential pillar for any possible stability in the Middle East.

I would like to reiterate once again that only an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of legal crossings for the flow of humanitarian assistance, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza can alleviate the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian situation and its repercussions on security and stability there.

Turkey will continue to support the Palestinian reconciliation, which we believe constitutes one of the pillars for a lasting peace in the Middle East. We strongly support the goal of establishing a unity Government that embraces the Palestinian people as a whole.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we have a historic opportunity before us in the coming

five months to reach an agreement and finally end this decades-long conflict. It is now the time for sincere and concrete action. We need to seize every chance for momentum, which will help revitalize the talks between the parties, and take concerted action towards a two-State solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Turkey believes that the international community, and the United Nations in particular, plays an important normative role in setting the parameters of law and justice. In the hope that these parameters will be observed fully, Turkey will support all resolutions that the General Assembly will take action on under today's agenda item.

**Mr. Alyas** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to take the floor today in the debate on agenda item 36, on the question of Palestine.

I would like to reiterate our support for the statements made by the representatives on behalf of the Arab Group and the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/68/PV.57).

This debate coincides with the celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, an important occasion upon which the international community has once again expressed its full solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people in the defence of their rights, self-determination and the struggle for an independent State and their dignity. This time last year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/19, granting the State of Palestine the status of non-member observer State. That resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority as a demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for the cause of Palestine and the natural right of its people to a viable independent State like any other State in the world.

We have closely followed recent developments in the peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis. We hope those talks will lead to a just and comprehensive peace that will enable the Palestinian people to recover all of their rights in the framework of an independent State, within the pre-June 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principles of international law and, above all, the dictates of human conscience when it comes to the resolution of one of the most grave problems threatening peace and security, both in the region and around the world.

There is a feeling of frustration at the international level because of the Israeli practices that inflict

such suffering on the Palestinian people, including torture, human rights violations and a policy of illegal settlements that spread like a cancer in the area. Besides the inflammatory statements made by the occupying Power, on this very Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people the Israeli authorities have given the green light to the construction of more than 800 new settlement units in the West Bank. That shows the aggressive nature of the Israeli occupying authorities, who are approving the construction of settlements before even stating that they are willing to negotiate with the Palestinian Authority with a view to putting an end to the occupation and allowing for the creation of an independent Palestinian State. What is even worse, the Israeli authorities declared the new settlement policy on the very day of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, flouting the will and wishes of the international community and its resolutions and statements.

My delegation emphatically condemns the continued aggression of the occupying Power and of Israeli settlers against Palestinians, their seizures of property and assets, and their acts of aggression committed at Jerusalem and other religious sites. We call for the total lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip which began in 2007. My delegation wishes to stress from this podium the importance of the international community providing ongoing support to the brotherly Palestinian people in their peaceful attempts to recover their natural rights. We call on the international community to take actions to redress the injustices done to the Palestinian people, who are fighting for peace and against discrimination.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. Action on draft resolutions A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14 and A/68/L.15 will be taken immediately after the debate on agenda 35, "The situation in the Middle East."

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

## **Agenda item 35**

### **The situation in the Middle East**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/371)**

#### **Draft resolutions (A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17)**

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17.

**Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin by expressing my delegation's deep appreciation for the Secretary-General's report on the Middle East (A/68/371).

I wish to congratulate Palestine on the occasion of the first anniversary of its accession to its new status as a non-member observer State at the United Nations following the adoption of the historic resolution 67/19, which was passed with an overwhelming majority on 29 November last year. We aspire to seeing Palestine become a full Member of the United Nations very soon. We encourage the Security Council to respond to Palestine's request, made two years ago, to become a Member State. Egypt therefore supports negotiations between the State of Israel and Palestine in order to reach a final peace agreement.

However, we are deeply concerned about recent negative developments that are undermining the course of negotiations. This has put Palestinians in a difficult situation in the negotiations because of Israel's obduracy. I am also referring to the continued statements by Israeli officials and to measures that are undermining the peace efforts, including the successive statements about ongoing settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Today the General Assembly is considering the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East, as part of its response to efforts to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, because of the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel since 1967 and its refusal to respect the international will and international law and international humanitarian law, all of which are subjects of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. All these debates and resolutions are aimed at reaching a peaceful, permanent and just settlement to the question of Palestine.

In order to express the international community's rejection of Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory and its illegal practices there, I am introducing two draft resolutions on point 35 of the agenda, entitled "The situation in the Middle East," on behalf of the sponsors. The titles of these draft resolutions are "Jerusalem" and "The Syrian Golan".

The first draft resolution is A/68/L.16, on Jerusalem. It recalls General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the special situation of occupied Jerusalem. It states that all legal and administrative

measures and actions taken by Israel to change the legal status of East Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded. The text also reiterates that any fair, comprehensive solution to the question of Jerusalem should be backed by international guarantees ensuring freedom of worship and religious practices, ending settlement activity and illegal attempts at judaization undertaken by Israel and its settlers. It reiterates the continued rights of the Palestinian people to their religious practices and rituals, and calls both for a halt to any attempts to desecrate the Al-Aqsa mosque and the excavation work at the religious sites in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Here I mention the great importance that the question of Jerusalem has for all States Members of the United Nations. This is reflected in the statements of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, as well as in a series of resolutions from regional organizations on the subject.

The second draft resolution is A/68/L.17, on the occupied Syrian Golan. It recalls Security Council resolutions, particularly 497 (1981). It calls for Israel to comply with previous resolutions. The draft resolution reaffirms the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 vis-à-vis the Syrian territory that has been occupied since 1967, and Israel's responsibility to release that territory. The draft resolution also calls on Israel to withdraw completely from the Syrian Golan back to the borders of 4 June 1967, and to respect all the progress that has been made to date.

The people of the region are still suffering from the aftermath of war and aggression. They aspire to peace, stability and coexistence, but that will not occur without the Palestinian people recovering their full rights. This week, we are celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which solidarity will not be fully realized until Israel fully withdraws from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, in compliance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace, and in compliance with the rules of international law. That will happen only when the illegal and unfair measures of the occupying Israeli Power are halted. The international community must address an emphatic and clear message to Israel regarding those violations, which must cease, and communicate to Israel that they must stop flouting international law and that such actions will have consequences.

We trust that the two draft resolutions before us, contained in documents A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17, will be supported by all Members. We encourage Members to vote for them in order to affirm the will of the international community and their support for international law, put an end to the illegal Israeli occupation and implement all the principles and noble purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Nurfaizi** (Indonesia): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the question of Palestine (A/68/363) and the situation in Middle East (A/68/371).

This week, we are celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. However, despite the apparent support by States and other international actors for the Palestinian cause, it is with great sadness that we bear witness to the fact that the Palestinian people are still prevented from fulfilling their right to establish an independent and sovereign State.

For Indonesia, the future of the Palestinian people has always been one of tremendous importance. Our Constitution condemns colonization and foreign occupation, and, with that in mind, I wish to reiterate Indonesia's strong and unwavering support for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Indonesia remains convinced that the two-State solution, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, represents the best chance for a peace agreement between Palestine and Israel. To that end, we call on Israel to demonstrate good faith and make the best use of the negotiations currently under way to achieve that goal.

It is with great dismay that Indonesia once again draws attention to Israel's lack of good faith in its commitment to peace. Time and again, Israel has betrayed the trust of the international community, committing acts that undermine peace efforts. The settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territory is not only an affront to international law but also limits the viability of an independent State of Palestine. Indonesia therefore joins other States in condemning the continuation of the illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly East Jerusalem. It is also perturbing to note that Israel's recent decision to release the second batch of 26 Palestinian prisoners was followed by another decision to expand the settlements. It is universally accepted that the settlements violate international humanitarian and human rights law. In

that regard, and in the spirit of the most recent report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/HRC/22/62), Indonesia calls on all States to avoid involvement in settlement activities and to prohibit their people, including business groups, from participating in such activities.

We also feel dismayed by the continuing construction of the separation wall, contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory*, which states that the wall violates international law. We reiterate that the continued violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people is unacceptable. On this occasion, we want to draw particular attention to the detention of hundreds of Palestinian children. As was reported by the United Nations Children's Fund in February 2013, those children suffer systematic, widespread, and institutionalized ill-treatment. Israel's continued blockade of Gaza has also led to further deterioration in the socioeconomic situation.

Those Israeli practices have continued for many years, despite the strong opposition of the international community. Indonesia therefore takes this opportunity to renew its call on the Security Council to take steps to compel Israel to stop its illegal actions and to treat Palestine as an equal and respectable partner in the current negotiations.

Finally, in line with our commitment to opposing colonization and foreign occupation, Indonesia joins other States in demanding Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan. We would also like to use this opportunity to voice our support for all Security Council resolutions that declare that all Israeli activities in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal and have no validity whatsoever.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The situation in the Middle East remains highly turbulent, and China is very concerned about it. The international community should act in a prudent and responsible manner and play a proactive and constructive role, so as to promote peace, stability and development in the region, which is in the common interests of the countries of the region and the international community as a whole.

China has always advocated that countries and peoples in the region should pursue ownership of



their political system and their road to development in accordance with their national situations. We urge that differences be settled through inclusive political dialogue, while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic principles governing international relations. We oppose foreign intervention and the imposition of regime change. Comprehensive and integrated measures should be adopted to overcome the challenges faced, and we fully support the peace process in the Middle East. We also support the strengthening of economic cooperation and assistance aimed at creating conditions conducive to promoting peace and development.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. Given the current situation, the Palestinian issue has become even more important and urgent. The international community and the United Nations, which has the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, should play a bigger role in resolving the issue. China supports the United Nations playing such a role. Yesterday, President Xi Jinping of China conveyed a message of congratulations to the Assembly on the occasion of its celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He stated that he would like to extend warm congratulations, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, on the occasion of the opening of the special commemorative meeting.

The Palestinian question concerns the long-term stability, prosperity and development of the countries of the Middle East, including Palestine. To bring about a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian question at an early date serves the interests of the Palestinian people and people of other countries in the region. It is conducive to peace and stability.

It is important to remain committed to the peace negotiations in order to resolve the Palestinian issue. China welcomes the fact that Palestine and Israel have recently resumed peace talks and have maintained the momentum for dialogue. China hopes that the two sides will take specific steps to remove obstacles and achieve substantive progress in the peace negotiations at an early date.

China has provided sincere and selfless support to the just cause of the Palestinian people. We will continue to support the Palestinian people's efforts to establish an independent State of Palestine, with full sovereignty and East Jerusalem as its capital, on

the basis of the 1967 borders. We support Palestine becoming a Member of the United Nations and of other international organizations.

China has been active and steadfast in moving the Middle East peace process forward. This year, China received the visiting Palestinian and Israeli leaders, put forward a four-point proposal for the settlement of the Palestinian question and hosted the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, thereby contributing to the promotion of peace between Palestine and Israel. At the same time, China continues to firmly support the capacity-building of Palestine and the improvement of its improved humanitarian situation.

With regard to the Middle East peace process, the achievement of peace is the aspiration of the people and is a prevailing and irreversible trend. We sincerely hope that the international community will work together and make a joint effort to move the peace process forward. As a permanent member of the Security Council and a responsible nation, China is ready to work with the rest of the international community to make tireless efforts to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East as soon as possible.

China is seriously concerned about the situation in Syria and sympathizes deeply with the suffering of the Syrian people. We have always maintained that a political settlement is the only solution to the question of Syria. The Syrian Government and opposition parties should seek a political solution through direct talks and should embark on a political process led by the Syrian people.

With the joint efforts of all relevant parties, the "Geneva II" conference on Syria is currently scheduled to be held on 22 January 2014. China believes that step to represent significant progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and in promoting a political settlement of the Syrian issue. It is also a step in the right direction, for which we have always worked. China welcomes and supports such a step.

We commend all the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Joint Special Envoy Brahimi and all other countries concerned. We hope that the parties concerned will not lose time in preparing for the conference. We call on all Syrian parties to focus on the interests of the country and all Syrians, to actively participate in the political process and to commit to attending the

conference without preconditions in order to ensure that progress is achieved through the conference. China will continue to closely communicate and cooperate with all parties concerned, so as to play a positive and constructive role in finding a comprehensive, long-term and proper solution to the Syrian issue.

China has always supported peace efforts that are in the interests of the region and that contribute to the stability and long-term security of the Middle East. China will continue to work with the international community in its tireless efforts for the peace, stability and development of the Middle East.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to thank my colleague, the Permanent Representative of Egypt, for having introduced draft resolutions A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17 on Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, respectively.

The first Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, said, "If I were an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country". Those are the words of one of the leading founders of Israel. They touch on the heart of the question of Palestine, because the Palestinians are a people whose entire land has been occupied and who have been expelled from their homes. All their assets have been seized, despite the fact that the Palestinians agreed to establish their State on 22 per cent of historic Palestine.

However, Israel, the occupying Power, with the support of some Member States, believes that that is too much for the Palestinians. It thinks that stealing 78 per cent of historic Palestine does not harm the Palestinian people. Israel is therefore asking the leadership and people of Palestine, with infinite insolence, to make extreme sacrifices and compromises. According to the Israeli leadership, the path of suffering imposed in that way can be compared to imposing the path of Jesus to the cross on the Palestinians in the occupied city of Jerusalem.

General Assembly resolution 273 (III) of 1949 provides for Israel's admission to the United Nations and requires it to accept all obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. It also requires Israel to uphold all United Nations resolutions, including those that affirm the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right of return of Palestinians to their homeland, from

which they have been expelled by Zionist bands, and compensation for the losses that they have suffered.

In addition, at the time of Israel's admission, the General Assembly noted Israel's statements and interpretations before the Ad Hoc Political Committee that it would implement and respect those resolutions. That is to say, Israel's admission to the Organization was linked to the condition that Israel would comply with resolutions pertaining to the establishment of a Palestinian State and the return of Palestinian refugees.

However, that commitment was, unfortunately, completely overlooked in the context of the mechanisms that empower Israel and give it impunity. That country has continued to ignore international law and to flout United Nations resolutions. It has increased its aggressive practices and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including, as Members are all aware, through the ongoing construction of settlements and their expansion. That has led to the gradual annexation of Palestinian territories in such a way as to prevent the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State, and violates the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It is also fomenting discord in the region.

That is what Israel wants — to create conditions for discord that would lead to a volatile situation in the region because Israel cannot survive without war. That was the wish of Ariel Sharon, the former Prime Minister of Israel, who said in 1973 that

"we will make a pastrami sandwich of them. We will insert a strip of Jewish settlements in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements right across the West Bank so that in 25 years time neither the United Nations nor the United States, nobody will be able to tear it apart".

That was what Sharon predicted in 1973, and it has come to pass. It is now the status quo imposed by the occupation.

It is unacceptable that although the United Nations has addressed this question as one and in solidarity with Member State, that has yielded no results on the ground. Israeli intransigence and the support of certain countries for Israel should not lead to deadlock at the United Nations or prevent it from carrying out its responsibilities, in particular putting pressure on Israeli politicians to end the policy of occupying Arab territories, repudiate the illusion of the law of force and

instead accept the force of law. The bitter reality is that a large part of the precious Syrian Golan is occupied by Israel and has been for over 45 years, despite the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 497 (1981), endorsing the 1967 borders and declaring Israel's annexation of the Golan to be null and void and without legal effect. The United Nations must therefore address the occupation of our territory in the Golan seriously, in line with the relevant resolutions.

It is unacceptable and incomprehensible that the United Nations has allowed Israel to flout those resolutions, including through gross human rights violations in the occupied Golan, and that Israel's policy of discrimination, terrorism and oppression of our children in that territory has gone uncontested. Restrictions have been imposed on all aspects of their lives; they have been deprived of oil, water, gas and other goods. The blockade on exports from the occupied territories, in clear violation of international law, cannot continue. Israel is carrying out a publicity campaign for a brand of wine produced in the occupied Syrian Golan and exports to countries that oppose its policies. We are making efforts to engage in bilateral talks with those friendly countries, which probably do not know that this so-called Israeli wine actually comes from Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan.

It makes no sense that Israel should continue its settlement campaign in the Golan, build the apartheid wall, and refuse to provide international organizations with maps of the minefields it has planted in the Golan. By sponsoring terrorism and deploying illegal armed groups in the Golan Heights, Israel is solely responsible for the consequences of its dangerous actions. It would also be responsible for their terrorist acts, which could have colossal consequences in the region.

We have exposed the reality of Israeli activities to the Security Council and the Assembly. Just and comprehensive peace can be achieved only with the withdrawal by Israel and its people from all Arab territories, in compliance with the pre-1967 borders; the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital; and the return of refugees, in accordance with all relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Otherwise, Israel will continue to wrongfully believe that it can impose its occupation policies and will on the Arab States and the Palestinian people.

Finally, I invite all Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.17, on the Syrian Golan, in

order to uphold international law and the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

**Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman):** I have the pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman, to express our appreciation to the President for convening this meeting to discuss the issue of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. The delegation of my country would like to convey, through him, its gratitude to Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal, for his efforts as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for the report prepared by the Committee contained in document A/68/35.

I also wish to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of members of the Committee for supporting the cause of the Palestinian people, as well as the comprehensive statement of the Chairman of the Committee on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (see A/68/PV.57). Allow me to speak on agenda items 36 and 35, "The question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East".

There is no doubt that this meeting is of special importance, as it will consider an issue — the question of Palestine — that continues to be a long-standing challenge for the international community, at a time when Palestinian land remains under occupation and its situation worsens by the day as a result of the oppressive systematic practices of the occupying Power. The international community must not remain silent and allow that situation to continue. We are now in the fifth decade of the occupation, and the displacement and destruction of human beings and infrastructure are still ongoing. Yet the proud people of Palestine are not discouraged and continue to claim their legitimate rights, including the right to the establishment of their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My country, while congratulating the Palestinian people on its great achievement in becoming a non-member observer State at the United Nations and a full member of UNESCO, calls on the international community to support the right of this State to become a full Member of the United Nations.

The Government of my country expresses its deep concern about the tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories resulting from the continuous Israeli blockade, the imposition of a humanitarian crisis on civilians in the Gaza Strip and the intensive campaign of inhuman and illegal acts — including fierce attacks to

change the demographic composition of the population, the forced displacement of indigenous people, practices by the occupying Power in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and around religious sites, and the intensification of Israeli settlement activities, including the construction of settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem — as punitive measures due to the acceptance of Palestine as a full member of UNESCO and as a non-member observer State at the United Nations.

This year marks the thirty-sixth anniversary of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Since 1977, we have seen wonderful international support for the struggle of that people in their quest to attain their inalienable legitimate rights. This year also marks the sixty-sixth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 181 (II), on the division of the land of Palestine into two States. However, the Palestinians are still deprived of exercising their legitimate rights and their national sovereignty, including their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State on their own territory. That situation has led to the existence of more than 4 million Palestinian refugees in the diaspora, who suffer from alienation and deprivation.

Achieving the aspirations of the Palestinian people depends upon the international community protecting them from the inhuman, illegal and arbitrary actions taken against them by successive Israeli Governments. The international community should therefore stand in opposition to such practices — particularly the embargo on the Gaza Strip — which are in flagrant violation of human rights and which prove that Israel is not interested in achieving peace.

It is necessary for the international community to send a clear message to Israel to cease those practices and to call for genuine negotiations that will lead to the establishment of security and stability on the basis and principles of land for peace, the resolutions of the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative.

My delegation would like to reiterate what the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman stated during this year's general debate, namely, that

“Among the important international issues that have yet to be resolved is the Palestinian question, which is considered the cornerstone of any possible peace in the Middle East. Despite the efforts made and the agreements concluded through

direct negotiations between successive Israeli Governments and the [Palestinians], no settlement has yet been reached” (*A/68/PV.21, p. 16*).

In that regard, my country supports the efforts of President Barack Obama and his Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry, because those efforts represent an opportunity for all the peoples of the region to establish a peace that leads to economic and social development and revives the hopes for peaceful coexistence among the people of the region in order to build a Middle East that is able to contribute positively to global civilization.

The Sultanate of Oman was one of the first countries to welcome the peace process as a natural and civilized approach to settling differences through dialogue and negotiation. Oman calls on the parties to the peace process to play an active role in the settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, given the seriousness of the situation and the crisis being experienced by the region. That will require the Security Council and the Quartet to work more vigorously and urgently towards a just and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. That should lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, living side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders.

**Ms. Naeem** (Maldives): Time and time again, the small windows of opportunity for peace that emerge in the Middle East have been closed by wanton violence and destruction. The region remains volatile, torn apart by deep divisions. Human development and societal advancement are at risk of being stunted. The international community remains unable to facilitate a lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East.

The Republic of Maldives welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Middle East (A/68/363).

My delegation extends its deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the family of Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Ansari, cultural adviser at the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon, and to the families of the victims of this latest travesty. The Maldives strongly condemns new and recurring acts of violence against diplomatic and consular representatives. We also express our sincere condolences to all families of the victims of the recent bombings in Egypt and Iraq.



The Maldives once again reaffirms that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes a serious threat to peace and security. We call on all perpetrators of violence to be brought to justice in accordance with international obligations.

Justice is one of the basic prerequisites for building strong democratic foundations. The Arab Spring was meant to be the springboard upon which the populations of the region could exercise their legitimate right to determine their own systems of governance. It is unfortunate that nations were unable to make significant headway. It is unfortunate that we, as the international community, were unable to help them towards a democratic process.

Peace and stability is the most important prerequisite for democracy. The bombing of the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon reminds us that the conflict in Syria is one that inherently affects the wider region. With cross-border gunfire, the conflict's spillover effects are undeniable and inevitable. In addition, the resurgence of transnational terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, is deeply troubling, as is the death toll, which has now exceeded 100,000 people. With over 2 million refugees and more than half of the country displaced by the ongoing civil war, the situation is becoming dire.

The Maldives urges the international community to ensure that assistance to the refugees is adequate and that support for their host countries is maintained. With Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq experiencing massive flows of refugees, we would like to take a moment to recognize their efforts, and those of the League of Arab States, in mobilizing humanitarian assistance.

Unfortunately, many refugees are met with hostility. The Maldives is especially concerned by reports of arbitrary arrests and the indefinite detention of refugees. We urge the authorities concerned to work with the international community to find long-term solutions. Without the ability to meet the needs of refugees, the deteriorating situation in the region will only be exacerbated. International and humanitarian law must prevail, and the international community has the obligation to ensure that those laws are upheld.

Those very laws have been flouted for decades in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan. The territories have been occupied illegally, with no consideration for national sovereignty or international instruments and standards. The Assembly's warnings and advice have gone unheeded. Basic human rights are

being constantly flouted in the name of stability, with human dignity and humanitarian concerns ignored. Cycles of violence and hatred are being perpetuated through occupation, without any progress towards a lasting solution.

The de facto annexation of the Syrian Golan — through the decision of Israel, on 14 December 1981, that allowed the occupying Power to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration — and the construction and expansion of settlements are flagrant violations of international law, conventions and resolutions, especially the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The need for a political solution is becoming crucial, as yet another generation is being born into uncertainty and violence. Lasting and comprehensive peace can be maintained only by preserving territorial integrity and the de-occupation of sovereign territories. The interests and concerns of both parties must be met. The Maldives believes firmly in a two-State solution, whereby an independent Palestine along the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital lives side by side in peace with Israel. The basis for fruitful international dialogue is always compromise and, above all, trust. Therefore, while the Maldives commends the newly initiated dialogue between both nations, we call upon Israel to suspend the expansion of settlements so that the talks can be given a chance to succeed. The world — and, most important, the people of those nations — still eagerly wait for the status quo to give way to progress and peace.

The Maldives commends the efforts made in Geneva with regard to easing sanctions on Iran in return for nuclear transparency. Sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran represent a clear threat to the situation of human rights in the country. The Maldives urges all stakeholders to continue to work towards ending those devastating economic measures. Sanctions have negatively impacted a burgeoning economy. The Maldives encourages the steps being taken to reduce that burden on the country. The sanctions' contribution to inflation, their detriment to the provision of health care and their adverse impact on vulnerable populations are all cause for concern. In spite of that handicap, the country appears to have made progress in areas such as women's education, health care, youth development and access to basic services. Furthermore, with the election of President Rouhani, we welcome what the Secretary-

General referred to as positive signs of dynamism in the country's civil and political life.

Like every other person living in every other part of the world, the people of this troubled region deserve to live their lives with dignity. They deserve to have peace, stability and room for economic advancement. They also deserve to enjoy the dividends of democracy and to have a say in the way their Governments are run. Men and women alike deserve to have access to opportunity and education and to find their own paths towards prosperity.

The Maldives believes that the people of this region must understand and remain committed to supporting the universal values and principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The international community must stand ready to support them and ensure the progress of our global community. It is only through a peaceful resolution to the many conflicts raging around the globe — through meaningful dialogue, mutual understanding and honest discussions — that we as a community of nations can take a step forward for the benefit of generations to come.

**Mr. Khazae** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me, at the outset, express my appreciation to the colleagues and representatives who have conveyed their condolences and condemned the terrorist attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran's Embassy in Beirut.

As the realities on the ground clearly demonstrate, and as recently reported to the General Assembly by various bodies of the United Nations, Israel's policies and practices continue to violate international human rights and the dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under its occupation. The Israeli regime has unabatedly committed appalling crimes of extrajudicial killings and targeted assassinations, while other Israeli crimes — such as the destruction of homes, infrastructure and agricultural land, the illegal expansion of settlements, the detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, the construction of an expansionist wall and the collective punishment of the Gazan population — have also continued persistently.

The sea, air and land blockade on the Gaza Strip imposed by the Israeli regime entered its seventh year in June. As a result of that illegal and devastating blockade, the humanitarian and economic situation there has deteriorated to a dangerous point. In that connection, my delegation reiterates its condemnation of the Israeli

regime's inhuman and unlawful closure and blockade of the Gaza Strip. We consider that to be collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population, as is the continued obstruction of the freedom of movement of persons and goods and the obstruction of the reconstruction and recovery of the Gaza Strip. In addition to the Zionist regime's violation of countless provisions of human rights law, we underline that such collective punishment measures by the Israeli regime constitute a crime against humanity and pose a serious threat to international peace and security and regional stability.

It should be noted that the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and properties, accompanied by escalating violence by settlers and forced evictions, is seriously exacerbating the situation on the ground. The Zionist criminal acts against the Palestinians and other peoples in the region are the gravest threat currently posed to regional and international peace and security. It is evident that durable peace in Palestine and the Middle East will be possible only through justice, an end to discrimination, an end to the occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, the return of all Palestinian refugees, and a democratic mechanism allowing all the inhabitants of Palestine and Palestinians driven out of their homeland to determine their future in a democratic and peaceful fashion.

Today's meeting is taking place just a week after two terrorist attacks against the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Beirut. An Iranian diplomat, his wife and 22 others were killed and over 140 people wounded in those attacks. The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns such terrorist attacks and underlines the necessity of bringing the perpetrator of these terrorist attacks to justice. We are alarmed by the rise in extremism and violence, which we regard as one of the most serious threats to international and regional peace and security. In that regard, we believe that the United Nations should undertake new efforts and leave no stone unturned to address violent extremism and the wide-ranging problems that it presents.

Regarding the situation in Syria, the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the way out of the present crisis lies in strengthening a comprehensive peaceful political process aimed first and foremost at ending the violence between the parties and at starting a national dialogue between the opposition and the Syrian Government towards a peaceful political process. The countries of the region should cooperate

among themselves to make such a dialogue and national reconciliation possible. To that end, the Islamic Republic of Iran has actively participated in the talks with the regional countries affected. It seems that no other alternative exists if we want to restore peace and stability to Syria and to the region.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government's unwavering and continuing support for the Palestinian people in their rightful and legitimate struggle against the occupation, and for their just quest to exercise their right to self-determination.

**Mr. Churkin** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today, the world is gradually coming to realize the indisputable fact that increasing military capabilities and reliance on force cannot overcome the problems we face. It is becoming clear that the dangerous trend of recent years, involving increasing attempts to overcome a series of crises and violent situations by forceful methods, including in the Middle East, is close to the breaking point.

The resumption of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians through the mediation of the United States is evidence that this is so. We have actively supported the efforts of the United States and sincerely hope that the process will be successful.

However, it is clear that the negotiating process is complex. In such conditions, we especially need the role of the Quartet to be stepped up as a mechanism, recognized by the international body and authorized by the Security Council, to accompany the Middle East settlement process. It is extremely important that the League of Arab States be included in the work of the Quartet. We are convinced that a solution to the Palestinian problem must be found in accordance with the well-known international legal bases, including the resolutions of the Security Council, the Madrid principles, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is also clear that no solution will be found while the Gaza Strip remains isolated. It is important to step up efforts, including those of Egypt, to restore Palestinian unity. The States Members of the United Nations voted specifically for such a unified Palestinian State on 29 November last year, when Palestine gained its status as an observer State in the Organization. The negotiated solution to be achieved by the Palestinian people will be far more sustainable and long-term, including from the point of view of Israel's security interests, than any that may be rejected by the Gaza

Strip. Therefore, it is necessary that Palestinian unity be restored on the platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative, involving the recognition of the State of Israel in the context of a comprehensive settlement. Hamas must be involved in the negotiating process.

It was the logic of inclusiveness rather than isolation, dialogue rather than confrontation, that allowed for the destruction of the Syrian chemical arsenal, for the reaching of an agreement regarding the peace conference on Syria in Geneva, and for the choice — after prolonged diplomatic efforts — of 22 January 2014 for the date of its convening. That same method also worked in regard to Iran's nuclear programme, when all participants in the Six Party Talks without exception included Iran in substantive talks, not in a hollow negotiation process, which Russia always actively promoted.

The guarantee of success in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations is the creation of a climate favourable to their conduct. We are pleased to note that the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip as a whole is holding and that, after the conclusion of a ceasefire in November 2012, it has been the quietest period in a decade. Those positive developments can be attributed to Israel's release of Palestinian prisoners and normalization of Gaza's economic trade with the outside world. Unfortunately, meanwhile, these measures are not enough. They are often thwarted by steps that exacerbate confrontation, above all Israeli settlement activity. According to universally recognized norms of international law, such settlement activity is illegal and must cease.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, which has raged since the middle of the last century, is replete with stories of human tragedy and suffering spanning the years and generations of people who have been wounded, locked up, expelled from their homes and cut off from the world by checkpoints, the separation wall and military blockades. The Palestinians are desperate and losing hope for justice. Nearby, Israelis live in fear of rockets, extremist acts and unpredictable regional convulsions. Unfortunately, a perilous status quo endures on the ground, strengthening extremist views on both sides, the belief in the alleged correctness of the use of violence, and intolerant ideologies motivating those who are willing to propagate them throughout the region and beyond. That does nothing to solve the long-standing problem of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples.

That is precisely why the Arab-Israeli settlement, especially the Palestinian problem, cannot be put on the back burner, no matter the scale of the Middle Eastern turmoil. The stability of the entire region depends in large part on its resolution. It represents the core issue for all of us.

The future, not only of the Middle East, North Africa and specific States but of international stability as a whole, will depend on how things go in this vast area and on the methods that are used to settle conflicts, be they raging or simmering. It will also depend on how international law and the standards that underpin the United Nations — particularly respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in internal affairs and the non-use or threat of use of force — are perceived in the future. Those principles should be the unshakeable foundation of the international community's collective work to resolve crises in hotspots, including Syria, where — through our contacts with the Secretary-General and his special representatives, international partners and the Syrian Government and opposition — we are working on achieving a political and diplomatic agreement as soon as possible through an international conference on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex).

Russia understands and supports the aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East and their desire for greater justice and the preservation of their broad rights and freedoms. We start from the belief that all peoples should be able to determine their own fate. We are ready to fully contribute to that goal while firmly adhering to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the logic of dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

**Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia): I am delivering a shorter version of my statement, the full version of which will be circulated in the Assembly Hall.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has remained unresolved for the past four decades. Over the years, numerous efforts have been made to settle the conflict, but all have progressed too slowly or have never attained their goals. Israel's violations of international law have continued unabated in other occupied Arab territories as well. Again, we see a pattern in the occupying Power's refusal to honour its commitment to international agreements, compounded by the Israeli leadership's inflexible attitude. Those are

conditions that have a direct bearing on the situation in the Middle East, and hence the reason we are here today.

It is against that backdrop that Malaysia reiterates its support for the Palestinian leadership in its commitment to the ongoing track of direct negotiations, despite repeated Israeli provocations threatening the viability of a two-State solution. The international community should not expect the Palestinian people, who have been living under occupation for more than 40 years, to offer more concessions when there were almost none to give from the beginning. Furthermore, my delegation is of the view that it is not enough to say that settlements are unlawful and illegitimate, since they have already been declared to be so by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and the Security Council itself. We therefore hope that responsible Member States will join the mounting realization that there is an urgent need to implement policies that delegitimize the Israeli occupation, including through the framework of regional organizations and groupings.

In East Jerusalem, the true nature of Israel's illegal acts has become even more evident, particularly the Judaization measures that effectively evict Palestinians from the city. Palestinian homes are routinely demolished and Israeli houses quickly erected in their place, a structural if not an ethnic cleansing. While such measures undermine the foundations of the peace process on the ground, excavations are being carried under the ground to undermine the foundation of the Al-Haram Al-Sharif mosque. Malaysia is also gravely concerned about the systematic aggression of extremist Jewish groups in Al-Quds, particularly their attempts to enter and control the Al-Aqsa mosque. My delegation calls for an end to those and other illegal acts committed by the Israeli Government and its people in East Jerusalem, since we believe they can result only in changing the realities on the ground in accordance with Israeli interests. We also wish to reiterate that all administrative measures and procedures instituted by Israel to impose its laws on East Jerusalem are null and void.

Regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, Malaysia reiterates its firm rejection of Israel's efforts to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the territory. We particularly object to Israel's pillaging and



profiteering from the illegal exploitation of occupied territories, including ongoing activities exploiting oil deposits in the southern half of the occupied Syrian Golan. All measures and actions undertaken by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, including the construction and expansion of illegal settlements, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, Malaysia calls for the immediate and full withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). Syrian sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan must be restored.

Malaysia is also deeply concerned about the effects of the conflict in Syria spilling across the borders of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. On that note, my delegation would like to offer its condolences to the people and Governments of Lebanon and Iran following last week's bombing of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut. We reiterate, however, that Israel must immediately cease its continuing and almost daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty, whether through its airspace, by water or by land. We call for a full cessation of hostilities and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon, with full respect for the Blue Line, in line with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

Having laid out my delegation's concerns and positions on developments in the Middle East, we are pleased to be a sponsor of the two draft resolutions under this agenda item introduced earlier by the representative of Egypt (A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17). The root causes of the turmoil in the Middle East must be addressed — including, first and foremost, Israel's illegal occupation of Arab territories — before a comprehensive, just and lasting peace can be achieved in the region. It is thus our hope that the draft resolutions on Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan will be adopted, as in previous years, as a demonstration of the international community's resolve to achieving that end.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17 will be taken after we have taken action on draft resolutions A/68/L.12 through A/68/L.15 under agenda item 36.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

### **Agenda item 36 (continued)**

#### **Question of Palestine**

##### **Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/68/35)**

##### **Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/363)**

##### **Draft resolutions (A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14 and A/68/L.15)**

**The Acting President:** Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions one by one, I should like to remind members that they will have an opportunity to explain their votes on all four draft resolutions before and after action is taken on all four resolutions.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Prossor (Israel):** In my remarks yesterday (see A/68/PV.57) I spoke about the truth. In the barren deserts of truth, myths find fertile ground to grow wild. Nowhere is that more true than here at the United Nations. In a few minutes the Assembly will vote on a series of draft resolutions that serve no other purpose than to demonize Israel. As it does every year, Israel will vote against those draft resolutions, because they are as outdated as they are outrageous. They serve only to create more burdensome institutions, more cumbersome procedures and a more wasteful process.

Many countries face dire conditions at home, and the global economy is under severe strain. Yet the Palestinians manage to persuade many countries in the Hall to allocate precious resources to United Nations bodies that denigrate and defame Israel. Every year the United Nations spends over \$6 million on the Division for Palestinian Rights, on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and on the Department of Public Information special information programme on the question of Palestine. Every year I ask what those institutions are up to. What constructive purpose do they serve? Are they promoting peace? I ask and ask, but I am still waiting for an answer. If members are having trouble finding me, I remind them that we sit in alphabetical order. Israel can be found between Ireland and Italy, and not far away from Iran, the Islamic Republic of. Some people — I cannot guess who — have reason to conceal what those United Nations bodies are doing.

Allow me to enlighten members and tell them how their money is being spent.

In April 2013, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a conference in Addis Ababa. That United Nations-backed conference chose a speaker who — coincidentally of course — called on participants to boycott Israel. Such actions, along with the draft resolutions being voted on today, are fuelling the conflict and undermining the peace process. Yet country after country, in a repetition mode that is an insult to intelligence, sees no problem in parroting those resolutions and voting like sheep.

The draft resolution to establish a year of solidarity with the Palestinian people (A/68/L.12) is entirely devoid of substance. It is the pet project of a certain delegation that attempts to endorse a Palestinian narrative and rewrite history. That initiative also blatantly violates the Palestinians' commitment to avoid provocative unilateral steps at the United Nations. I want to remind the Palestinians that there is only one route to Palestinian statehood, and that route does not run through this Hall in New York. It runs through direct negotiations between Jerusalem and Ramallah. There are no short cuts, no quick fixes and no instant solutions. All those who claim to stand for peace should ask what they are voting for. For solidarity with perpetuating the conflict? For solidarity with a culture of hate and incitement? For solidarity with unilateral actions instead of direct negotiations?

I conclude by saying the following: there is no moral clarity in this vote of solidarity. I ask my colleagues to consider the texts before them and then to ask whether they will continue the tradition of rubber-stamping draft resolutions or whether, for the first time, they will take a stand and seek lasting solutions. To my colleagues in the Hall I say, surprise yourselves by acting reasonably and responsibly.

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take action on draft resolutions A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14, and A/68/L.15.

We turn first to draft resolution A/68/L.12, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce

that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to the delegations listed in document A/68/L.12, the following countries have also become sponsors: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Guyana, Mauritania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania,

Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

*Draft resolution A/68/L.12 was adopted by 110 votes to 7, with 56 abstentions (resolution 68/12).*

**The Acting President:** We turn next to draft resolution A/68/L.13, entitled “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.13, the following countries have also become sponsors: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei-Darussalam, Guyana and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal,

Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

*Draft resolution A/68/L.13 was adopted by 108 votes to 7, with 59 abstentions (resolution 68/13).*

**The Acting President:** We now turn to draft resolution A/68/L.14, entitled “Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat”. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.14, the following countries have also become sponsors: Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei-Darussalam, Guyana and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Cameroon, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Togo, Tonga

*Draft resolution A/68/L.14 was adopted by 163 votes to 7, with 7 abstentions (resolution 68/14).*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.15, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.15, the following countries have also become sponsors: Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei-Darussalam, Guyana, Kyrgyzstan, Niger and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa,



San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Australia, Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Tonga

*Draft resolution A/68/L.15 was adopted by 165 votes to 6, with 6 abstentions (resolution 68/15).*

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Erdman** (United States of America): As President Obama declared in this Hall earlier this fall, at the start of the general debate of this session of the General Assembly,

“[L]et us emerge from the familiar corners of blame and prejudice. Let us support Israeli and Palestinian leaders who are prepared to walk the difficult road to peace” (A/68/PV.5, p. 14).

With this goal in mind, we remain deeply troubled by the repetitive and disproportionate number — some 16 in total — of one-sided General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel. By contrast, the Assembly has adopted only four other resolutions critical of specific Member States, all focused on severe human rights abuses.

All parties to this tragic conflict have direct responsibilities for ending it, and we are disappointed that United Nations Members continually single out Israel without acknowledging the obligations and

difficult steps required by all sides. In the light of the ongoing negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, we strongly urge a halt to any one-sided actions in the United Nations system that might disrupt that process or distract from it, as we all know it to be the only hope for a lasting peace settlement.

Continued support for such biased resolutions only complicates the efforts to reach a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. These resolutions presupposed the outcomes of permanent status issues that are at the core of ongoing negotiations. Furthermore, the systematic bias and distortion of the conflict conveyed by these resolutions damage the institutional credibility of the United Nations.

I would like to highlight three particularly troubling resolutions: resolution 68/13, on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat; resolution 68/12, on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and resolution 67/118 on the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. These three resolutions renew mandates for ineffective United Nations bodies established a generation ago, in the process wasting valuable resources, expending limited time and reinforcing the perception of systematic and inherent United Nations bias against Israel. All Member States should evaluate the effectiveness of supporting and funding these bodies.

There is no contradiction between support for the Palestinian people and support for Israel. Supporters of a Palestinian State should do all they can to support the parties' efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace, and avoid actions, like the adoption of these resolutions, which hinder progress to that goal. We therefore do not support these counterproductive resolutions. Instead, we are focused on continuing to work with the parties, the Quartet and our international partners to create a context conducive to negotiating progress. We must all redouble our efforts to build the trust and confidence necessary for a lasting agreement.

**Mr. Neo Ek Beng Mark** (Singapore): I have the honour to speak in explanation of vote after the adoption of resolutions 68/12, 68/13, 68/14 and 68/15, under agenda item 36, “Question of Palestine”. Singapore voted in favour of resolution 68/12 on the understanding that the reference in operative paragraph 2 to “the achievement of the two-State solution on the

basis of the pre-1967 borders” should be interpreted in the same manner as set out in operative paragraph 1 or resolution 68/15, namely, “the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders”.

**Mr. Gabrėnas** (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The EU wishes to thank the Palestinian delegation for the successful outcome of our negotiations on a number of resolutions on which action is taken in the General Assembly. As an outcome of these negotiations, the EU confirms its consolidated voting pattern on these resolutions. At this point on time, we would like to put on record that, with regard to all resolutions adopted at the Assembly’s sixty-eighth session, the EU and its member States consider that whenever Palestinian Government is mentioned this refers to the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the European Union as a whole has not expressed a legal qualification with regard to the term “forced displacement”, which is used in a number of resolutions submitted under agenda items 36 and 52.

**Mr. Emiliou** (Cyprus): I am taking the floor in explanation of vote with regard to resolution 68/12. Cyprus would like to reaffirm its commitment to supporting the efforts of Israelis and Palestinians to reach a comprehensive settlement. We believe that peace talks are the only way to reach a viable solution, and we therefore urge both parties to focus all their efforts on them. In this regard, we would like to express our concern over unilateral initiatives that could negatively affect, directly or indirectly, the negotiating process and the prospects for an overall settlement. The agreed moratorium on such actions for a period of nine months should be respected by all concerned.

**The Acting President:** We have now heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 36.

### Agenda item 35

#### The situation in the Middle East

##### Draft resolutions A/68/L.16 and A/68/L.17

**The Acting President:** Before the Assembly takes action on the resolutions one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain

their vote on the two draft resolutions before and after action is taken on both resolutions.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/68/L.16, entitled “Jerusalem”, and A/68/L.17, entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

We turn first to draft resolution A/68/L.16. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/68/L.16, the following countries have also become sponsors: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei-Darussalam and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the

Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Australia, Cameroon, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Togo, Tonga

*Draft resolution A/68/L.16 was adopted by 162 votes to 6, with 8 abstentions (resolution 68/16).*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.17, entitled "The Syrian Golan". I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Botnaru** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/68/L.17, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

*Draft resolution A/68/L.17 was adopted by 112 votes to 6, with 58 abstentions (resolution 68/17).*

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolutions just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Brazil and Argentina on the item on situation in the Middle East, to explain our votes with regard to resolution 68/17, on the Syrian Golan, just now adopted by the General Assembly.

Brazil and Argentina voted in favour of the resolution because they believe that its essential character is linked to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or threat of force against the territorial integrity of a State. That is an imperative standard of international law.

At the same time, I want to clarify the position of our delegations with respect to operative paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not prejudge the content of that paragraph, particularly the reference to the line of 4 June 1967. Brazil and Argentina believe that it is important to make progress in the search for a solution to the Syrian-Israeli track in the Middle East conflict in a way that will put an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights. Therefore, once again, on behalf of the Governments of Brazil and Argentina, we stress the importance of resuming negotiations in order to find a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the observer State of Palestine, who will make a statement after the adoption of the resolutions.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): Let me congratulate you, Sir, for your patience and your wonderful way of presiding over our deliberation. You and your team have demonstrated a great degree of patience, wisdom and an appropriate manner in handling our deliberations. I also thank all of the countries that have sponsored the resolutions that have just been adopted and all the countries that voted in favour. We are very grateful for the positive votes in support of those resolutions and for the fact that, this year, the number of positive votes in support of almost all of those resolutions exceeded last year's number by several votes.

We trust the judgement of the international community and its wisdom in voting favourably for all those resolutions. The international community, its position and wisdom, and its defence of international law remain a source of encouragement for the Palestinian

people in its ongoing struggle for the attainment of its inalienable national rights. We are, therefore, grateful for your support. We will continue the march, along with the peaceful struggle of our people in the occupied territories, to end the occupation that started in 1967, and that will lead to the independence of the State of Palestine. In that way, the two-State solution will become reality.

Before I conclude, I believe that those who have said the resolutions served no purpose are mistaken in their thinking. If such resolutions serve no purpose, then what is the business of the General Assembly and, for that matter, of the United Nations? We are in the business of upholding international law, an objective that is a very noble cause and well served by those resolutions. Therefore, those who think the resolutions serve no purpose should explain what business the United Nations is in, if our business is not to respect the Charter of the United Nations and uphold international law. Moreover, on other occasions, those delegations cannot fight hard for the adoption of resolutions when they themselves do not respect General Assembly resolution .

I think it is very arrogant and insulting to all of us here when they use expressions like, "We are voting like sheep." Such an expression shows a complete disrespect for all of us, to our intelligence, to our scrupulousness in listening to all of the arguments and making our decisions through voting. A sore loser takes such a position when he or she tries very hard to convince us of his or her argument, and, upon losing overwhelmingly, insults all of us by saying, "You vote like sheep". I am not in a position to advise those who use such language to act differently, but I would leave it to the judgement of all of those present to deal with them in an appropriate manner. One person also indicated that the resolutions are one-sided and single out Israel. I think that Israel is singling itself out by its actions and its refusal to honour and respect its obligations to implement those resolutions.

Let me conclude by responding to another person who said that such resolutions are eroding the credibility of the United Nations. I believe what is eroding the credibility of the United Nations, including General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, is the lack of will to implement United Nations resolutions. Once we have the will to implement United Nations resolutions against anyone and to prevent preferential treatment, at that point we will be the defenders of the



Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations, the General Assembly and the Security Council. We in Palestine will never lose hope in what the United Nations represents and stands for, although a lack of will prevails in this body in implementing those resolutions.

Let me finish on a high note. I know that in a few days we will be celebrating a beautiful holiday. I wish everyone happy holidays!

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to make a statement.

**Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to reiterate my thanks and the gratitude of my country, Syria, to all those countries that sponsored resolution 68/17, on the Golan Heights and those that voted in favour of it. I reiterate the call of my country to realize a comprehensive and just peace by implementing the relevant United Nations resolutions and other known resolutions of international legitimacy. Syria remains steadfast and dedicated to the total liberation of the Golan Heights from Israeli occupation, to a return to the pre-June 1967 borders and to the complete clearance of Israeli settlements in the now-occupied territory, using all the means permitted under international law, under the banner of which we are meeting here today.

**The Acting President:** Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Roet** (Israel): In the discussion regarding the situation in the Middle East, it is unfortunate that so many countries decided to abstain. They decided to abstain from talking about 120,000 casualties in Syria, to abstain from speaking about the use of chemical weapons by Syria, to abstain from showing concern regarding the terrible situation with regard to the lack of medical assistance and using that in all those war crimes.

It was really heartwarming to see that the Syrian delegates had really taken the time to study what the Israeli prime ministers have spoken about and to take a break from killing their people. The Syrian

representative is becoming a master at revising history, and unfortunately, he seems to think that members in this Hall support him. We have heard him speaking about a series of baseless accusations against Israel. I am glad that he is now launching words at us. I really hope that his leader will choose to do the same and speak instead of doing the horrible things that he is doing.

There is so much to speak about, but I would really like to focus on the Islamic Republic of Iran, which sometimes seems to have trouble pronouncing the name of my country. The Iranian representative said that the greatest obstacle to world safety is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a conflict which we must, should and hope to resolve. As we have said before, the road for peace runs between Ramallah and Jerusalem, and not in these halls. But the biggest obstacle to world security is Iran; it is not Israel nor the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is time to speak about that.

I will put aside the issue of nuclear weapons and their nuclear programme. Iran is the chief sponsor of terror in the world, and it is such hypocrisy when we sit here and see the Iranian delegate speaking with alarm about what he calls violence and extremism. It is such audacity to speak about that while Iran is basically the architect of international terror. Iran has not backed down; it is continuing as we speak to support Hezbollah, killing people in Syria, with terrorist branches around the world, and that should stop.

Iran is the world's central banker, chief trainer and primary sponsor of terror. It provides sophisticated weapons to Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist groups in the region and around the world. It is always an interesting experience when the delegate of the greatest State sponsor of terror speaks out against terror. I think we should not allow that to happen in this Hall. The issues being discussed here are serious enough without baseless propaganda. Countries should better their own people and look at what they are doing instead of lecturing other countries.

As I mentioned before, to all the countries that said they are sincerely hoping for peace in the Middle East, the way to do it is not to support baseless resolutions such as these. The way to do it is to encourage the Palestinians to move forward with peace negotiations going on today.

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I did not want to take the floor again. I did not want to have to address the General Assembly a second time. Nevertheless, the senseless statements we have just heard from the representative of Israel have driven us to take the floor once again to respond, not to provide an explanation or to offer clarifications because those are unnecessary. The position of the Member States in the vote on the resolution is quite clear.

The representative of Israel is not addressing the two agenda items under which we adopted the two draft resolutions on the status of Jerusalem and the situation in the Middle East. He asserts that what is happening in the General Assembly lies outside history. As a matter of fact, his position, that of his delegation and his Government, and their impertinent stand, both within the United Nations and outside it, are what lie outside history. In any case, the representatives of Israel do not understand history because they cannot understand the depths of history. We are talking about millennia; the region that we have inhabited for millennia is our land. Israel's history, on the other hand, does not even go back 60 years. It is full of terrorism, blood, wars, occupation and acts of hostility.

By defying United Nations resolutions, the representative of Israel shows that he despises the opinions of Member States and their votes in favour of that resolution. That does no service to Israel whatsoever. An Arab proverb says that when you have been afflicted with sin, hide. The representative of Israel appears not to have understood as yet that his and his country's situation is embarrassing, and that his country's policies have been rejected by the overwhelming majority of Member States. He does not seem to understand that.

The representative of Israeli took the floor to say that there have been 100,000 victims in Syria. However, he did not mention how many of those victims had been killed by armed terrorist groups supported by Israel, nor exactly how many from those armed groups are being treated in Israeli hospitals. Nor did he say that it was his country's mad policies that exposed United Nations peacekeepers in the occupied Golan Heights to extreme danger. That is despite the military, political, intelligence and media assistance to those armed terrorist groups, which weave their way through the

supposed disengagement lines in the Golan and expose United Nations peacekeepers to all kinds of dangers.

That is just one of the many acts that the Government of Israel has committed over the past six decades, which include massacres and crimes against the Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrian, Lebanese and so many others. Their long arm of terrorism has reached as far as the Sudan and Tunisia, as have the political attacks carried out by the Mossad in Western and other world capitals for decades. The Israeli representative is making absurd attempts to distract Member States so that they will not notice the construction of settlements in the occupied territories and how they preclude both the peace process and an end to the occupation. They will not even recognize the persecution that they have visited upon the Palestinian people.

Are such absurdities normal diplomatic practice? The Israelis come to the United Nations and work for years within the body, but do not understand items on the agenda that have long been part of the Organization's programme of work. How can they possibly understand that when they have the unconditional support of certain powerful States Members of the Organization? Such support has led to this Israeli impertinence, the building of settlements, the shedding of blood and successive eruptions of violence. If the protectors of Israel were really convinced of the need for peace and the need to work for peace, they would have forced successive Israeli Governments to engage seriously in the peace process and terrorism would have ended. Israel lives in a fictional world. The fiction of force is what drives Israel, but it is bound hand and foot to the country that sponsors it.

**Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to reply to the reference by the representative of the Israeli regime to my country during today's meeting. It constitutes another attempt by that regime to divert attention from its own criminal policies and abhorrent atrocities in the region, in particular the heinous crimes committed against the people of Palestine.

The illegal Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinian people include, inter alia, the intensification of illegal Israeli activities, widespread violence against the Palestinians, the devastating blockade against the Gaza Strip, the illegal construction of the apartheid wall and its destructive impact on the socioeconomic condition of the Palestinians in Jerusalem, the incidence of the mass imprisonment of

Palestinians and administrative detentions, the routine demolition of homes and the resulting displacement of Palestinians — all of which are just the tip of the iceberg. They demonstrate that the regime is continuing, even intensifying, its heinous crimes against the oppressed, defenceless Palestinian people, in defiance of human rights principles, international law, United Nations resolutions and even the basic norm of decency.

What is perplexing is that the Israeli regime, a source of terrorism, danger and instability in the region, continues to perpetrate its crimes and violations with a sense of impunity. We call on the international community, in particular the United Nations, to acknowledge the detrimental effects of such dangerous policies and activities, and to take decisive measures to prevent further criminal acts in the occupied territories. In that regard, the Organization's adoption today of the resolutions on Palestine sends a strong message of solidarity with the Palestinian people. That message rejects all of the Israeli regime's illegal policies and practices, and the fact that it ignores and denies its occupation, aggression and discrimination.

I would also like to mention one of the main aspirations of all of the nations in our region, including Palestine, namely, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which was proposed in 1974 by Iran — a country that is a party to all of the international treaties banning weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). As Members are well aware, the aggressive and expansionist policies of the Israeli regime, its large arsenal of nuclear and other sophisticated weapons, its clandestine nuclear weapons programme and nuclear facilities not subject to international safeguards, as well as its non-compliance with international law, norms and principles, are the only threat to peace and security in the Middle East and beyond and the only obstacle to the establishment of such a zone.

Indeed, peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East as long as such an irresponsible regime maintains a massive nuclear arsenal, continues to threaten the region and beyond, remains outside treaties that ban WMDs, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and defies the repeated calls of the international community to comply with international standards, norms and principles.

Against that backdrop, in order to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, the

international community has no choice but to exert maximum pressure on the Israeli regime in order to compel it to eliminate all of its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State without further delay or preconditions, and place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

**The Acting President:** I now call on those representatives who wish to make a second intervention in exercise of the right of reply, which is limited to five minutes.

**Mr. Roet (Israel):** Something unique has happened today. I have learned something from the Syrian delegation, that is, the wonderful Arab proverb "When you have done something evil, you should hide". That is what Israel has been lectured to do by the Syrian representative, the same representative who, besides today being a professor teaching proverbs, is also trying to teach diplomacy to Israel, which is paramount in diplomacy. I thank him. We will stay as we are. I prefer to be as we are. His words and those of the Iranian representative are back to front, just as the Syrian nameplate was while the Syrian representative was speaking.

The world has changed. When you have done something evil, you should hide. Please follow that example. There was no shame while the Syrian representative spoke to us. There is no sympathy for his own people. He is a revisionist of history, claiming that the Jewish history in our region is 70 years old, which is to reject history. Taking the floor in this Hall, he did the same thing only two weeks ago in comparing Israelis to Nazis, which by European or any moral standards is considered a denial of the Holocaust. He who compared Israel to Nazism is the representative of a country that kills its own people as we speak today. And the Assembly, except for the representatives of three countries, was silent. No one stood and said anything. It is unfortunate that that goes on and that the Syrian representative seems to feel that he can say whatever he likes and can lecture whomever he wants.

With regard to Iran, I appreciate the lecture on human rights, on Israel and on what our country should do coming from a country where basically all it has to teach are the ABCs of terrorism. The manual of terrorism was written by Iran. It also wrote the manual of trying, under the guise of such discussions as those here today, to acquire nuclear weapons.

However, let us speak about some of the accusations regarding Israel and where they come from — the Islamic Republic of Iran. Today, in Iran, women are denied basic rights. Free expression is repressed. Minorities are persecuted and elections are a sham. Eight out of 800 people trying to run for President were elected to a position in the democracy that does not, in fact, have real power in Iran. In Iran, free expression is repressed, minorities are persecuted, gay people are murdered, and women are denied their basic rights and are subject to harassment and arrest by the notoriously brutal morality police.

At the same time, Israel remains a thriving and multicultural democracy and is a place where the rights of all minorities are respected and all religions are tolerated. That is Israel. We are not perfect. We might make mistakes. We try to correct them. We might, hopefully, move towards peace with the Palestinians, which is the subject of the discussion, but we will not be lectured to by the worst regime. I have never used that word before but it seems that the Iranian representative has difficulty in pronouncing the name of my country. So what should I call his country? The Ayatollah's regime? No, it is Iran. Some kind of respect is needed.

I have one last word to say about Syria and its representative's accusation of Israel meddling inside Syria. Like other issues that he spoke about, that is complete nonsense. Those in this Hall may be interested in this fact, It is Syria that is directly involved in military activities that harm the operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the area, using aeroplanes to bomb in the areas where UNDOF is serving; Syria then comes to this Hall and to the Security Council and says, with regard to the situation in the Middle East, let us not talk about Syria. Well, I suggest that he does.

**Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Israeli occupying forces should understand that what is said inside this Hall by our delegation or any other delegation is not a lecture. We do not lecture here. I believe that the other delegations, too, do not lecture when they talk about Israel's violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and its continuous occupation of Arab territories for decades. Those are facts. The representative of the Israeli occupying forces must understand that those are facts documented in United Nations reports. It is not information provided by the Syrian representative or any other delegation.

Furthermore, we have all heard the levity with which the Israeli representative treats the resolutions of the Organization and the voting by Member States on the resolutions that we have just adopted. The representative of the Israeli occupying Power wants to ensure United Nations support for whatever measures he likes, including the building of settlements, support for occupation and human rights violations by Israel, the occupying Power. That is what the representative of the Israeli occupying authorities wants. I remind him that, while criticizing the United Nations, he forgot the fact that the United Nations itself was behind the establishment of Israel through resolution 181 (II). The Israeli representative seems to have a short memory.

The representative of the Israeli occupying Power talks about democracy and tolerance, but all those present in this Hall, including those that support Israel, certainly know the limits of Israel's tolerance for other religions. They know the magnitude of Israel's violations and desecration of the Muslim and Christian holy places in the Palestinian territories. We do not need to mention names here.

The Permanent Representative of the Israeli occupying Power has said that the United Nations has adopted several resolutions on the Israeli occupation and that that is a waste of United Nations resources. In that regard, we would like to tell the representative of the Israeli occupying Power that, if he is concerned about United Nations resources, Israel should end the occupation of the Arab territories, end human rights violations and comply with the Charter of the United Nations. Israel will then not have to witness the adoption of resolutions that condemn Israeli practices and call on its withdrawal from the occupied territories.

**Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Criticism by the representative of the Israeli regime is not necessarily a bad thing. Since its inception and continued existence, that regime has been based on bloodshed, terrorism, occupation, mass killings, atrocities and a wide range of cruel acts in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. At present the bloody hands of that regime bring destruction and instability throughout the world, in particular in the Middle East. It is ridiculous for the representative of such a regime, a main sponsor of State terrorism, to criticize others who give moral support to freedom fighters and to those fighting against the foreign occupation of their homeland. It is obvious that making baseless allegations against my country



cannot justify, or assist, that regime in hiding its long list of crimes and atrocities — occupation, aggression, militarism, State terrorism, including masterminding the assassination of innocent Iranian nuclear scientists, and crimes against humanity.

Finally, I should like to refer to the representative of Israel's statement regarding democracy in Israel. I think democracy in an occupied territory is nothing but

a joke. There cannot be democracy in an occupied land, a land that belongs to the Palestinian people. Therefore, I should remind him to stop talking about democracy in this body.

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*