



# General Assembly

Official Records

## Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

**367<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Monday, 24 November 2014, 10.30 a.m.

New York

*Chair:* Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.*

### International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): This is a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Gary Francis Quinlan, President of the Security Council; Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; and His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations.

I wish also to welcome representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and representatives of civil society organizations, and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this special meeting.

Allow me, at this point, to make a statement on behalf of the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I welcome you warmly to our special meeting in commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I wish to express my sincere gratitude for your

participation and show of solidarity with the great people of Palestine.

As we gather on this Day, we are still deeply affected by the latest conflict in Gaza, the third Israeli war on Gaza since the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006. In opening this Day of Solidarity, I wish to ask for a minute of silence to remember the loss of 1,486 civilian lives in Gaza this summer, including 513 children and 269 women, with the number of deaths still rising from the aftereffects of the war. It also bears noting that six civilian lives were lost on the Israeli side.

*The members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): Much has happened in 2014, and as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People draws to a close, I should like to review some of the most important events of this year. Let me start with the many welcome events that have made a decisive contribution to and promoted significant progress in the long, heroic march of the Palestinian people towards freedom and independence.

First, on 11 April Palestine officially acceded to the four Geneva Conventions and 10 other international treaties and conventions. This is a historic and long-overdue move in the face of the ongoing harassment of and violence against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers and military forces, including the razing of homes, the displacement of civilians, the imprisonment of children, the uprooting of olive trees and the destruction of agricultural livelihoods.

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Secondly, several European Governments and parliaments have decided to take bold initiatives to end the occupation of Palestine. In a historic move, the new Government of Sweden recognized the Palestinian State on 30 October, becoming the 135th country to do so. Moreover, the House of Commons of the United Kingdom and the Irish and Spanish Parliaments held votes that overwhelmingly recognized the State of Palestine in a non-binding motion. It is hoped that France will follow with its own parliamentary vote on this issue. I should like in this regard to recall the International Meeting of Parliamentarians in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held by our Committee on Friday, supported and encouraged the parliamentarians of the world to play their special role and assume their responsibility to ensure a peaceful but definitive end to the occupation. It is parliamentarians who adopt the laws that Governments and executive branches must execute.

The Committee strongly welcomes these encouraging developments. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all remaining Governments to recognize the State of Palestine, which would give the Palestinians an equal playing field in negotiations on the peaceful settlement of the conflict, and help the parties to reach a just and lasting political solution. That is why, by first recognizing the Palestinian State within the framework of core international instruments, the international community would contribute to ending this enduring conflict.

Thirdly, Palestinian political factions achieved a long-awaited breakthrough and broke a long-standing deadlock by forming a Government of national unity and holding its first cabinet session in Gaza on 9 October. The Committee congratulates the new Palestinian Government and strongly encourages it to strengthen and consolidate its ties for the greater good of the Palestinian people. The international community can support only a strong and effective unity Government that acts in accordance with internationally accepted norms and standards.

Finally, global solidarity with the Palestinian people was demonstrated in the wake of the destruction in Gaza, resulting in \$5.4 billion being pledged at the international conference in Cairo on 12 October. Reconstruction efforts in devastated Gaza have now begun with the first shipments of building materials entering the Strip in recent weeks. The Committee commends the efforts of the Governments of Egypt

and Norway, as well as the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, in achieving this significant result.

Our Committee has supported these positive developments on the part of the international community, and has organized a variety of political and cultural events within the framework of the International Year of Solidarity. This included a lecture by the renowned intellectual Noam Chomsky at United Nations Headquarters, the 21 November meeting of parliamentarians of which I spoke earlier, film screenings of Palestinian movies, and, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine, a fashion show by one of Palestine's most talented designers, showcasing the cultural vitality of the Palestinian people, which is an important source of their resilience in the face of great hardship.

Earlier in the year, we held conferences on the question of Jerusalem in Ankara, convened jointly with the Government of Turkey and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and on assistance to the Palestinian People in Nairobi, as well as an international meeting in Quito, which demonstrated the strong solidarity of Latin American and Caribbean countries with the people of Palestine. We also held a joint meeting with the League of Arab States in Cairo, which resulted in the Cairo declaration, as well as a round table in Geneva on legal aspects of the question of Palestine, which was attended by renowned international law experts from various parts of the globe.

We still have one important meeting before us, a United Nations/civil society meeting on peace between Israel and Palestine, to be held in Seville, Spain, on 2 and 3 December, where the Committee will hear the views of local Governments and many civil society movements around the world. Members will agree that civil society organizations are an important link between the Palestinian people and Governments inasmuch as they convey their needs and concerns, and lobby for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People. It is also important to remember the importance of social media and the opportunities it presents, when used well, to have an impact on youth around the world.

This year has also seen many developments that are less welcome. I would mention here the illegal expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, in particular in the strategic E-1 area of the West Bank, and the restricted access — only recently lifted — of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem to

men under 35 years of age. Also of great concern is the detention of scores of Palestinians who resisted the occupation, including the rearrest of over 2,000 former Palestinian prisoners who had been released under prisoner exchanges and other agreements between Israel and Palestine.

The Gaza war in July and August, which lasted 50 days, destroyed the homes of over 100,000 Palestinians, vital sanitation and electricity infrastructure, businesses and even United Nations facilities, causing disproportionate civilian casualties and bringing about an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The Committee of course strongly condemned this year's war in several statements and called for the full lifting of the blockade of the Gaza border crossings so as to allow the entry of goods and materials for humanitarian aid and reconstruction. The Palestinian people continue to suffer under a regime of collective punishment, which is illegal under international law and an injustice that the international community must do everything it can to address.

The Committee is mandated to support the Palestinian people in their pursuit of a just and lasting political solution that allows them to exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, to national independence and sovereignty and of return to their homes and property. This year is a turning point that we hope will end with Palestine's accession to the United Nations as a full Member State. The status quo is unacceptable and dangerous. We must move forward and find new solutions to give the Palestinians the necessary means to succeed in their aspirations.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa.

**Mr. Kutesa**, President of the General Assembly: I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this important meeting. Today is an opportunity to raise awareness among Member States and the international community on the unresolved question of Palestine and express our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

I congratulate Ambassador Fodé Seck for his leadership and commend the Committee for its work this year within the framework of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The International Year, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 68/12, reflected the desire of the international community to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a final peace agreement. Sadly, this year did not bring about the progress we were hoping for, as the direct peace talks were suspended.

The failure of the most recent round of negotiations was almost immediately followed by an intensification of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The 50-day conflict in summer 2014 in Gaza resulted in the deaths of 1,500 and injury of 11,000 Palestinian civilians, including children, women, the elderly and humanitarian workers. In Israel, six people lost their lives. Thousands of homes and critical infrastructure, including school and hospitals, were also destroyed.

The conditions on the ground remain volatile, and the situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank is still a source of serious concern. In the light of the recent violent incidents that led to civilian deaths and injuries, I strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians and attacks against religious sites. I call on all parties to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions and incitement. All acts of violence must cease.

In addition, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical, with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The long-standing restrictions on the movement of people and goods continue to undermine the living conditions of the 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza. Therefore, the blockade should be lifted.

Regrettably, as we meet here today, the path towards a durable peace remains uncertain. The peace process now hangs by a thread, and the process of rapprochement seems to be slipping away. The lack of progress and the renewed tension require sustained attention. The international community should continue to support the parties to overcome their differences and return to direct talks within a clear framework, based on internationally recognized parameters.

In that context, the time is particularly opportune for the United Nations to play a more decisive role in supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement in the Middle East. The negotiations should be based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine living side by side, in peace and security, within recognized borders.

Equally important is the support of the international community to the Palestinian refugee population. Indeed, over 5 million Palestinian refugees continue to experience exceptionally difficult circumstances. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has played a vital role in providing basic services to alleviate the suffering of the growing Palestinian refugee population. I commend the Agency for its work. However, the recurring cycle of violence and the scarcity of funds hamper the Agency's ability to provide basic humanitarian services.

The Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA is meeting on Wednesday, 3 December 2014. Taking into account the fact that 97 per cent of the Agency's funding comes from voluntary contributions, I reiterate my strong appeal to Member States and other international partners to make additional efforts to fully fund the Agency's core budget. I also urge new donors to make financial commitments to the Agency's work.

As we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I invite Member States, the United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders to strengthen their valuable support and assistance to the Palestinian people so as to ensure the full realization of their inalienable rights and the establishment of a durable peace in the region.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): The Committee is thankful for manner in which the Assembly, under the leadership of Mr. Kutesa, is dealing with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Middle East as a whole.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Gary Francis Quinlan.

**Mr. Quinlan**, President of the Security Council: Let me begin by thanking the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council for November 2014.

The Security Council remains closely engaged on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and remains fully committed to seeking a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East addressing all final-status issues based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid

terms of reference, including land for peace, the Road Map for peace in the Middle East and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Council has continued to receive monthly briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and from the Department of Political Affairs and has held open debates on the Middle East on a quarterly basis. The Council heard directly from the Secretary-General at the most recent open debate (see S/PV.7281), held in October 2014, and welcomes his personal engagement. At a subsequent emergency meeting on Jerusalem (see S/PV.7291), Council members stressed the need for a de-escalation of tensions in the city. Council members also expressed support for the special and historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at holy sites in Jerusalem.

In 2013, Council members welcomed the resumption of direct talks between the Palestinians and Israel and expressed the hope that both sides would seize the opportunity to narrow their differences and achieve substantive progress in the talks. In its press statement on 12 July (Sc/11472), Council members expressed their support for the resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In a presidential statement of 28 July (S/PRST/2014/13), the Council urged the parties and the international community to achieve a comprehensive peace based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, as envisioned in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008).

Council members have also condemned acts of violence on both sides, including rocket and other attacks directed at Israel. During the past year, Council members have expressed concern over Israel's settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and many have condemned and termed them as illegal or illegitimate. Council members have said that such actions can undermine efforts towards peace talks and the viability of the two-State solution.

The Council met regularly during the conflict related to Gaza during July and August, adopted a presidential statement on 28 July and issued a press statement on 12 July. The Security Council has called on all parties to engage in efforts to achieve a durable and fully respected ceasefire on basis of the Egyptian initiative and for full respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of the civilian population. The



Security Council expressed its grave concern regarding the loss of civilian lives and casualties as a result of the crisis related to Gaza.

Also in July, the Security Council called for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and stressed the need for the immediate provision of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, including through urgent additional contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Council continues to recognize and commend the vital role played by the Agency, along with other United Nations and humanitarian organizations, in addressing the critical humanitarian needs in Gaza. Council members have welcomed the tripartite agreement reached between the United Nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority that will help to meet reconstruction needs in Gaza. The Security Council applauds the efforts of UNRWA to assist Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan and expresses its hope that the international community will increase its support to UNRWA.

Sustained development of the Palestinian economy is crucial to the realization of the two-State solution. The Security Council calls on the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and provide support to the development of the Palestinian economy, which could have a positive effect on negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel. Some Council members have emphasized the need for the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President Abbas, to govern throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

The Security Council attaches importance to the efforts made by the Quartet to advance the peace process. Council members also recognize the contribution made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

To conclude, the Security Council will continue to make efforts to facilitate a just and equitable solution to the Palestinian question and to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement based on the two-State solution.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Gary Francis Quinlan, President of the Security Council, for his important statement, which reconfirms that the Council remains committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the

vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl.

**Mr. Krähenbühl** (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East): I am greatly honoured to be present today here in New York to observe, with the Committee, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

This is also an important day on the calendar of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as it is 65 years—or nearly two thirds of a full century—since our Agency was created to provide relief and works to Palestine refugees. Our ongoing existence is a reminder both of what has been achieved for the refugee communities over those years and of what happens when no political solution is found to address the underlying causes of the conflict and occupation. We are also reminded that UNRWA works in often very dangerous environments. On this Day of Solidarity, I must underline UNRWA's deep gratitude and heartfelt respect to the 11 members of our staff who died during the recent conflict in Gaza and the 14 who have lost their lives in Syria since 2011.

Today, pressures on Palestinians and Palestine refugees are immense, and the threats to their lives, livelihoods and future are of such a magnitude that hope is desperately needed somewhere on the horizon. We all know, of course, that hope in that most unstable region can be brought about only by resolute political action.

Surveying our areas of operations gives me cause for great concern. Recovery in Gaza is imperative. While we welcome the efforts being made to facilitate the entry of building materials into Gaza, which have led to some initial positive results, the reconstruction process must be accelerated. Otherwise, we will reach the winter with little progress made in repairing and rebuilding the homes of the 110,000 persons still displaced, including those residing in UNRWA schools. The people of Gaza deserve much better than that. In that context, it is important that Prime Minister Hamdallah be supported and that the Government of national consensus empowered to assume all its governance responsibilities in Gaza.

The international community must also play its part. While I welcome the Cairo donors' Conference and the significant pledges made, those need urgently to be transformed into actual disbursements. This is not a time for wait-and-see attitudes. Time is actually running out, tempers are rising, and people are very desperate.

In Syria, over 60 per cent of Palestine refugees are now displaced or have become refugees a second time over in Lebanon, Jordan or several other countries in the region. Fleeing the conflict, however, is becoming more difficult by the day, as borders are closing. Refugees, reflecting their desperate and seemingly hopeless plight, are taking increasingly dangerous routes across conflict zones or even attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. Several Palestinians who had survived the conflicts in Gaza and Syria have drowned in their attempts to cross the Mediterranean.

All those who remain in Syria are in dire need of assistance. The Yarmouk refugee camp remains of deep concern, with 16,000 to 18,000 civilians trapped, living in hunger, cold and constant fear. What is worse, since this summer, there has been a noticeable decline in what the Agency has been able to bring into Yarmouk. Far more needs to be done in terms of assistance and protection for the people of Yarmouk, and that continues to be explicitly and openly raised with the Syrian authorities.

We in UNRWA observe on a daily basis the human consequences and costs of the ongoing denial of dignity and rights of the Palestine refugees. It is our role to mitigate those effects by providing health, education, relief and social services to the refugees and to advocate for an end to the intolerable reality that shapes their daily lives. At the same time, UNRWA will strengthen its focus on protection and rights for all refugees, including the most vulnerable, because, at the end of the day, however good our services may be, they will never fully compensate for the unfulfilled legitimate expectation of refugees to see their rights respected.

While there is much pessimism and gloom about the near-term outlook, I want to end on an optimistic note that illustrates just what can be achieved, even in the most difficult circumstances. With the Committee's support and the support of participants' respective countries, UNRWA has achieved, over the decades, one of the most remarkable processes of human capital development in the developing world, in particular in the fields of health and education, as underlined once

again in a recent World Bank report, in which UNRWA's performance in providing education to refugees was very positively appraised.

Palestinians have always greatly invested in education, something UNRWA has been able to build on and expand. While I frequently hear comments about the burden for donors to continue assisting an ever-growing number of Palestine refugees, in actual fact donors and host countries have, through UNRWA, supported a major investment in knowledge and skills.

There are many developing and middle-income countries that would envy the Palestinians the quality of their human capital. As we know, there is one thing that Palestinians envy others for, and that is having a State. The creation of a Palestinian State living beside and coexisting with Israel would be the defining measure of the sustainability of that decades-long process of development.

I wish to underline once again the need for hope and political action. Indeed that is the key message from the pictures from the UNRWA archive that participants will see exhibited tonight. I look forward to seeing them there.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): We appreciate the severity of the financial crisis faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Like Mr. Krähenbühl, we hope that current and new donors will show more generosity so as to allow the Agency to continue its humanitarian mission, which is of capital importance. I would like to thank Mr. Krähenbühl for his outstanding leadership of UNRWA and dedication to the cause of Palestine refugees.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I was under the impression that my statement would be delivered when His Excellency the Secretary-General was with us, at some point this morning. However, Mr. Chair, if you want me to read out the message, I will be delighted to do so.

Before I read out the message, I want to express the appreciation of the Palestinian people and their

leadership for the United Nations, the outstanding leaders we have here on the rostrum and the messages they have delivered to us this morning. I would also like to say that the United Nations has been very active over the past few days in celebrating in many different ways the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Some participants were with us on Friday, when we heard an entire day of statements by parliamentarians from all corners of the globe celebrating the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Many of them sent a strong message regarding the path to be taken shortly by the Parliaments of Sweden, the United Kingdom, Spain and France in requesting that their Governments recognize the State of Palestine as an investment in peace and in saving the two-State solution.

We also held, that evening, a special reception in which we shared with so many participants here today — and others who will receive this directly through their missions — a book compiled by one of our brilliant artists. He is our Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Elias Sanbar. In that book, he compiled pictures of the history of Palestine — pictures taken since the invention of the camera in 1839.

Of course, today we will continue to listen to messages from leaders from all corners of the globe. In the afternoon, we will begin the debate on the question of Palestine, to be followed by a very special photo exhibit. The Secretary-General himself, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and others will be opening that photo exhibit. It is only a small snapshot of the tragedy of the Palestinian people since the beginning of Al-Nakba, through all of the tragedies we have experienced while struggling for the end of the occupation, the attainment of our rights and the independence of the State of Palestine.

We will conclude the evening tonight by introducing three brilliant Palestinian artists, who have come to New York from Paris. They are the Joubron brothers, who will be performing a concert in this room on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. They are brilliant musicians who are introducing revolutionary music, in which three oud players will be playing together. In Arab music, the oud is usually only one instrument among others

performing music. They are revolutionary, their music is terrific, and this is another contribution by the genius of the Palestinian people, who are trying to show the world the various aspects of our life.

I know that there are so many brilliant young Palestinians in the refugee camps and in the UNRWA schools in Gaza. Some of us had the opportunity to meet some of them a few years ago. We have so many different ways to tell our story and our narrative, and we are doing it in the most brilliant way. We are people who are alive, who are struggling for independence and self-determination, and I am sure that, with the help of the entire international community, we will succeed in accomplishing that objective. We hope that that objective will be accomplished very soon.

There are also nine young Palestinian journalists, men and women, from Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, who are being trained through the Department of Public Information programme for Palestinians. We also have, I believe, trainees from the Foreign Ministry who are being trained as diplomats through the Division for Palestinian Rights.

We are getting closer and closer to being fully ready to assume the full responsibility of running a functioning State that will not be a least developed country, but rather at the very least a middle-income State, as stipulated by the World Bank. On this very special day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we are these things, and so many other things that I have no time to mention. We are the Palestinian people, this time is our time, and this time is our time of independence.

That is my introduction to President Mahmoud Abbas's statement, which I now have the honour of reading to the Committee.

*(spoke in Arabic)*

“At the outset, I wish to convey to the Committee the greetings of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian people, and to all our friends participating in the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People around the world. We are marking this occasion one year after the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 68/12), and two years after its adoption of a historic resolution raising the status of Palestine to that of a non-Member observer State in the United

Nations (resolution 67/19). Of course, our objective and endeavours remain the attainment of full membership in the United Nations, which is our people's legitimate and legal right.

"In that regard, we underscore the call in General Assembly resolution 181 (II), by which historic Palestine was partitioned, for consideration to be given to an application for membership in the United Nations by either State. We further recall that Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949 was accompanied by two conditions: its commitment to resolution 181 (II) and the establishment of the Palestinian State, and its commitment to resolution 194 (III), which was reaffirmed in the Arab Peace Initiative, with regard to reaching a just and agreed-on solution to the plight of Palestine refugees.

"On this day, we reiterate our deep gratitude to all Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, as well as to all our brothers, sisters, friends and all freedom- and peace-loving peoples around the world, who continue to stand steadfastly by our people. We are grateful for their solidarity and support for the Palestinian people's legitimate national aspirations for the achievement of their freedom and independence and a just and lasting peace.

"Despite all the challenges, hardships and setbacks, we continue to have faith and hope that a just peace can be achieved in our region and that the truth will prevail. We therefore appeal to those here to continue to stand firmly for peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the right to self-determination, which the Palestinian people have too long been denied. It is high time to find the political will to act decisively for the realization of the inalienable rights of our people, including the right to independence in their State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"Since its inception, the United Nations has defended our cause, keeping it a priority on the agenda of the international community, extending a helping hand to our people and adopting resolutions and making recommendations that constitute a foundation that cannot be bypassed in the search for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution. The permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine must be upheld until the

issue, in all its aspects, is satisfactorily resolved. In that regard, we express our deep appreciation for the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chair, Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal, and other members of the Bureau, as well as all members and observers of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, aimed at promoting the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and ensuring the achievement of a just and lasting peace.

"Today, we also reaffirm our gratitude for the strong and principled resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other organs and bodies of the United Nations, including the International Court of Justice, all of which have contributed to safeguarding the rights of our people over many decades. Those resolutions have addressed all facets of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including, among others, the issues of the Palestinian refugees, the right to self-determination, the status of Jerusalem, the illegal Israeli settlement campaign, the unjust blockade imposed on our people in the Gaza Strip, the wall and the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

"We regret the fact that the countless resolutions on the question of Palestine have not been implemented, which has clearly compounded the conflict over many decades, inflicting grave hardships on the Palestinian people and the continued denial of their rights. That regrettable reality confirms the widespread conviction that there is indeed a double standard when it comes to United Nations resolutions regarding Israel that are not implemented, allowing it to continue behaving as if it were a State above the law.

"This year marked the passage of 47 years since June 1967, when Israel forcibly occupied the remaining territory of historical Palestine — the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This year also witnessed the suffering of our people under another brutal act of military aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, which this summer specifically targeted the occupied Gaza Strip, where our people endured a barbaric Israeli attack that killed and injured our people, including our children, caused massive destruction and



flattened homes above entire families, inflicting horrific devastation that has been condemned by all.

“We insist that such injustice cannot go on and we reiterate our urgent calls to the international community to act forthwith to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with its legal obligations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and its international commitments and to cease its violations of international law and its illegal, aggressive and destructive policies and practices. In that regard, we have presented, through the Arab Group, a draft resolution to the Security Council establishing a timetable for ending the Israeli occupation of our land, which has lasted for too long.

“Of course, we continue to insist that the insidious Israeli settlement campaign and the confiscation of Palestinian lands in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the capital of our State, must be completely halted. The demolition of Palestinian homes, the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and properties, and their forced displacement must stop. The construction of the apartheid annexation wall must cease. The Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli jails must be released. The unjust and inhumane blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip must be completely lifted and the rebuilding of Gaza undertaken with all possible speed. We must heal the wounds of our brave Palestinian people, including our children, women and the elderly, and all of the civilians in Gaza. All the illegal actions and measures designed to Judaize East Jerusalem and to alter or erase the Palestinian, Christian and Muslim presence and identity of the Holy City — including Israel’s attempts to establish a temporal and physical presence in the Al Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which have been rejected — must end. All the acts of violence and terrorism perpetrated by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian civilian population must stop.

“The State of Palestine continues to act with the utmost responsibility in order to serve its people and uphold its legal obligations and international commitments. It has consistently acted in good faith for the sake of peace, repeatedly reaffirming its adherence to the long-standing parameters of

the peace process, which are embodied in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and to a two-State solution for the realization of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

“For decades we have expressed our readiness to make a historic compromise in order to reach a solution to the conflict with Israel that conforms with international resolutions and initiatives through the establishment of our Palestinian State on only 22 per cent of the territory of historical Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to reach a just and agreed-on solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III). We reaffirm those commitments and that readiness once again today. Despite our diminishing hopes and the dangerous situation on the ground due to Israel’s continuing violations and brutal aggression against the Gaza Strip this summer, we remain committed to a two-State solution.

“I would like to assure the Committee that we desire to achieve a just peace that redresses the historic, unprecedented injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people between the Nakba of 1948 and the present day. We seek a peace that can bring about a complete end to the Israeli occupation and the independence of the State of Palestine on all Palestinian lands occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital; that ensures the security and dignity of our people and provides a just and agreed-on solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), as called for by the Arab Peace Initiative. In that regard, we stress that that historic initiative, which was widely welcomed by the international community, constitutes a real opportunity for the accomplishment of a comprehensive regional peace by which the Arabs recognize Israel in exchange for its full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the implementation of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

“We are grateful for the many expressions and acts of solidarity with the Palestinian people that we witnessed from people all over the world during the most recent Israeli war on Gaza. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge the changes that have

occurred in the Western world, where popular sentiment on the issue has reached official political levels. Sweden took a brave step forward in that regard with its recognition of the State of Palestine, and we hope that other European countries will follow suit. We would also like to acknowledge the significant and major gestures made in support of recognition of the State of Palestine by the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain, and the forthcoming parliamentary votes on the issue in France and many other European countries. We greatly appreciate all such positive developments, which enhance the opportunities for peace, security and stability in the region. Does Israel, the occupying Power, understand all of those messages?

“On this day, which marks the sixty-seventh anniversary of the adoption of the 1947 partition resolution 181 (II), and in this year, the International Year of Solidarity with our people, the Palestinian people look forward to the future with great hope. They are determined to remain steadfast on their land and to realize their inalienable rights, confident that the international community will stand with truth and justice so that hope, freedom, peace and security can prevail and ensure a better future for all of our children.”

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I would ask the Permanent Observer of Palestine to convey our sincere greetings and thanks to President Mahmoud Abbas for his important message. I would also like to assure President Abbas and through him the Palestinian people of the Committee's firm commitment to continuing its efforts as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like once again to thank His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Gary Quinlan, President of the Security Council, and His Excellency Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for their contributions to this important meeting.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow some of our guests to leave. I request that those remaining stay in their seats so that we can resume the meeting immediately.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.*

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ambassador Palitha Kohona, Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

**Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka), Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: It is a pleasure to be present on this occasion both in my capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and as representative of my own country, Sri Lanka. I would also like to take this opportunity to read out a message sent by His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka.

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this meeting, as well as a series of events being held throughout the year to commemorate this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Palestinian question remained prominently on the world's agenda this year, as has been evidenced by numerous parliamentary actions. The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Special Committee (A/69/128) expressed the Committee's strong feelings about the humanitarian impact of the recent escalation of violence that has resulted in large-scale destruction, devastation and displacement in Gaza, including its effect on United Nations facilities. The carnage produced by the attack on Gaza has caused the Committee severe distress. It is our fervent hope that, along with the ceasefire there will be solid political progress on the ground. While that seems almost too much to wish for, we must not give up hope for a lasting peace accord that can lead to the establishment of a fully sovereign and secure State of Palestine existing side by side with Israel. Our hopes are sustained by the determination and resilience of the Palestinian people, and particularly those in Gaza, who are now picking up the pieces of their shattered lives.

The challenges the Palestinian people face in their day-to-day existence, while simultaneously being asked to launch reconstruction activities, are enormous. The

Committee calls on the international community to honour the pledges made in Cairo last month for Gaza's reconstruction. We also hope that Israel will implement in good faith the Gaza reconstruction mechanism brokered by the United Nations. We reiterate our call for an end to the illegal blockade of Gaza, which has caused extensive deprivation there, and we welcome the partial lifting of the restrictions within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

The Special Committee hopes to see improvements in the situation of Palestinian detainees, including women and children, which remains one of our serious concerns. The Committee recently reported to the Fourth Committee on the ill-treatment, torture and medical neglect of detainees. A large number of Palestinians have been held under administrative detention, without charge or trial, for indefinite periods of time. Administrative detention appears to have become the norm in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Committee has also highlighted the ongoing construction of the wall, which is illegal under international law. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the matter continues to be ignored.

In addition, Palestinians have been widely dispossessed of their agricultural lands, partly owing to the exclusion zone existing in Gaza. The settlements and their effect on the Palestinian community constitute another flashpoint. The recent announcements of new settlement construction will further undermine the much-talked-about two-State solution. Violent behaviour on the part of the settlers and the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces threaten to inflame an already difficult situation and exacerbate the prevailing sense of hopelessness.

I would also like to recall that the Special Committee has urged the international community to transparently investigate the business activities of companies registered in their own countries that profit from and exploit Israel's settlements in the West Bank and the occupied Syrian Golan. The Special Committee is concerned that the tensions in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and the renewed provocations around the holy sites in Jerusalem, if not addressed, could ignite another round of deadly violence and result in tragic loss of life. Sustainable peace and security for both Israel and Palestine alike can be achieved only by addressing the burning causes of the conflict.

The members of the Special Committee join me in expressing the hope that next year will bring improvements in the political and economic landscape in the region that will result in stability, better living conditions and a bright future for the Palestinian people.

I shall now proceed to read out the message sent by His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka.

"It is an honour for me to reaffirm the unwavering solidarity of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka with the Palestinian people on this important occasion.

"The International Day this year is special as it also marks the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations. As we reflect today on the situation of Palestinians, it is my fervent hope that the international community will work with renewed vigour to explore all avenues available for peace.

"We in Sri Lanka remain deeply concerned about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. Finding a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East is vital, especially in the aftermath of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis resulting from the recent escalation of violence in Gaza. I have no doubt that the indomitable spirit of the people of Palestine will help them rise to meet the challenges before them, recover from the trauma and rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

"It is our hope that every effort will be made to lay the groundwork for the advancement of negotiations between the two parties, which would also help to avert the recurrence of such a humanitarian crisis. The blockade of Gaza that adversely affects essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development must be addressed, and the issue of increasing settlements should receive urgent attention. The political rapprochement between Gaza and the West Bank, with the formation of the Unity Government, is particularly encouraging, and the viability of the two-State solution will depend on the political unity and economic advancement of the people of Palestine.

"On this important occasion, it is essential that attention be paid to the children and youth of Palestine. Prolonged conflict and lack of

opportunities lead to an acute sense of hopelessness, especially among the youth. It is critical therefore that the international community undertake practical measures and programmes to support youth in order to inspire hope and confidence in their future.

“During my State visit to Palestine early this year, I had the opportunity of meeting with a cross-section of the Palestinian community and I was pleased to contribute to the further strengthening of political and economic relations between Sri Lanka and Palestine. The Government and the people of Sri Lanka remain committed to assisting the people of Palestine in livelihood development efforts, including through the sharing of expertise and the provision of technical and economic assistance.

“We recall the historic vote two years ago that granted Palestine non-member observer status in the United Nations. Sri Lanka supports Palestine’s application for admission to full membership in the Organization. The Government and the people of Sri Lanka will always stand firm in their commitment to a two-State solution on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, at peace and with dignity, alongside Israel.

“It is my fervent hope on this important occasion that the international community will work towards translating solidarity into positive action for the realization of lasting peace.”

This message was signed by His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): We appreciate the ongoing contributions of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories to our meeting, and the active participation of Ambassador Kohona’s country, Sri Lanka, in our Committee’s activities as an Observer.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Ambassador Gholamhossein Dehghani, Ambassador and chargé d’affaires ad interim of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, who will deliver a message on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

**Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to address this important meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I express my deep appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important work in promoting the cause of the Palestinian people. NAM’s appreciation also goes to Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for his valuable efforts in helping alleviate the pain of the people in Gaza during and following the recent Israeli aggression and for his perseverance in raising funds for rebuilding so many devastated homes, schools and hospitals there. Let me also commend the efforts of Egypt and Norway in successfully holding the Cairo Conference on Palestine on Reconstructing Gaza on 12 October.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people is a solemn occasion for renewing our commitment to a just and lasting solution for the question of Palestine and a durable peace in the Middle East. NAM fully supports the observance of this day, as it provides an opportunity every year to reflect on the situation of a continued occupation that has deprived the Palestinian people of their basic rights, subjected them to untold pain and suffering for many decades and lies at the heart of the Palestinian question and so many other issues in the Middle East.

The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda for more than 66 years now, and yet the Palestinian people have no glimmer of hope for realizing their right to self-determination and freedom. Despite decades of participation in peace efforts in good faith, the Palestinians’ plight has worsened on all fronts due to Israel’s persistent illegal policies and practices that undermine all peace efforts.

By resorting to state-of-the-art weapons and waging disproportionate war, Israel, the occupying Power, invaded the Gaza Strip in the most cruel and brutal manner last summer during the holy month of Ramadan. As a result of this brutal aggression, Palestinians’ homes and even United Nations premises, including schools, used as safe havens, were attacked and bombed, leading to the killing of more than 1,500 persons, close to 800 of whom were children and women,



and more than 11,000 persons injured. NAM reiterates its condemnation of the Israeli military aggressions against the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the deadly aggression against the people of Gaza last July and August.

It is disturbing that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to pursue such illegal practices with blatant impunity despite the prohibitions of such actions under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant United Nations resolutions and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The impact of these illegal measures on the Palestinian civilian population, including women and children and the most vulnerable, such as Palestinian refugees, must be seriously considered, and measures must be taken in accordance with international law to remedy this injustice.

The ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory continue to be a matter of grave concern. The recent provocative declarations made by Israel, the occupying Power, about plans to construct thousands more settlement units is further confirmation of Israel's refusal to cease its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. In this regard, NAM calls for urgent action and practical measures by the international community, in particular by the Security Council, to compel the occupying Power to cease completely its illegal and destructive settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, United Nations resolutions, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and its obligations under the road map in this regard.

NAM also expresses its strong condemnation regarding the illegal Israeli practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, legal status, character and geographic nature of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, so as to facilitate de facto annexation of more Palestinian land. Provocations by Israeli settlers and extremists, including vis-à-vis sensitive religious sites, particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque in recent days and weeks have worsened the situation on the ground, deepening the already grave doubts regarding Israel's claimed commitment to the two-State solution and peace.

The Movement expresses deep concern at the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process and calls for immediate and practical efforts to advance a fair and credible peace process based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and other major initiatives undertaken in the past decades. We stress that the peace process must ensure an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory and the other Arab territories occupied by Israel, including East Jerusalem; the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination in an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and a just solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees based on resolution 194 (III).

Finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in its capacity as the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, hosted the meeting of the NAM Committee on Palestine on 4 August in Tehran in which, in addition to the members of the Committee, many other members of the NAM also took part. In its final communiqué, NAM expressed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and called upon the international community and the International Criminal Court to investigate the crimes committed by Israel. In this respect, NAM welcomes the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1. To end, I should say that the message of His Excellency President Rouhani has been sent to the Committee and has already been registered there.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I now have the honour to give the floor to the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who will read out a message from His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the fortieth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

**Mr. Alyas** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I address the Committee today on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I have the honour to read out a message from His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the fortieth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

“I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the important role it plays in supporting the Palestinian cause and strengthening international solidarity on behalf of the Palestinian people so that they can exercise their legal and national rights. We appreciate in particular the Committee’s work this year, in the context of the commemoration of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, organizing many events to raise awareness about the Palestinian cause at the political, intercultural and artistic levels. Unfortunately, this has coincided with serious Israeli aggression and war crimes carried out by Israel in Gaza, in contradiction of international law and the will of the international community.

“The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is following with great concern the serious developments with regard to the Palestinian cause, in violation of the historic resolution 67/19, which recognized the State of Palestine two years ago. Despite that resolution, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued its settlement expansion by colonizing land, destroying houses, confiscating land, judaizing Al-Quds and Jerusalem and desecrating the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, Israel has perpetrated serious violations of international law, which has undermined all serious political negotiations.

“During the past year, we have seen peace talks, and all accompanying diplomatic activity, reach a complete standstill. That is not surprising, because Israel, the occupying Power, has rejected the Arab Peace Initiative and many international calls for peace. We are facing an Israeli occupation that has gone on for 47 years, during which 23 years of peace talks have been derailed by Israel because of its refusal to comply with and its attempts to circumvent international law.

“Despite the consensus of the international community on achieving a two-State solution, with an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, it is clear that Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing its racist policy and settlements and continues to violate human rights by pursuing a policy of the status quo on the ground and trying to change the demographic character of Al-Quds and Jerusalem by distorting its identity

and misrepresenting its Islamic and Christian history through the desecration of Christian and Islamic holy sites and isolating them from their Palestinian environs.

“In that regard, we reaffirm, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in accordance with international law, that East Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. It is the capital of Palestine and any claims to the contrary have no basis in international law. We reiterate the importance of the ministerial declaration issued by the OIC Ministerial Contact Group at its meeting on 12 November, which was presided over by His Majesty King Mohammed VI. The declaration condemned Israel’s aggression against East Jerusalem, including against holy sites, in particular the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, as that constitutes a provocation of those who believe in Islam.

“In that regard, we reiterate that the United Nations has the primary responsibility to engage Israel in ceasing its aggression and ensure that it does not continue, while ensuring the protection of the Palestinian people, its future, its property and its holy sites. We appreciate the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to put an end to the serious Israeli violations against Al-Quds Al-Sharif Jerusalem, with the support of the King of Jordan, Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, and the important role played by the Jordanian Waqf Ministry in preserving the holy sites. Israel must respect the role of Jordan in contributing towards the protection of holy sites.

“The settlement policy pursued by Israel since 1967 has nearly destroyed any possibility of a two-State solution. Its practices are a violation of international law and of all relevant legal agreements and resolutions. In that connection, the OIC once again calls on the contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to meet to take action to protect the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. It also requests the Security Council to take an urgent decision to call on Israel to respect the terms of reference of the peace process, to put an end to its settlement policy and to respect the rights of the Palestinian people, and, indeed, to put an end to its occupation of Palestinian territory and all other occupied territories, in accordance with the time frame that

has been established. The OIC would like to thank the Government of Sweden for its brave decision to recognize the State of Palestine. We call on all other States to do likewise. We also call on the Security Council to adopt a long-awaited resolution recognizing Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

“Lastly, I reaffirm the solidarity of the OIC with the Palestinian people in recovering their inalienable rights, including the establishment of a sovereign State in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif Jerusalem, so that a fair solution for the Palestinian refugees may be found, in accordance with resolution 194 (III).”

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Mauritania, who will read out a message from Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Chairperson of the African Union.

**Mr. Boubacar** (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to read out the message of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and current Chairperson of the African Union.

“On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II) on the Plan of Partition and the creation of two States on the Palestinian territory — the State of Palestine and the State of Israel — with Jerusalem being placed under a special regime as international corpus separatum. However, after 67 years, only the State of Israel has been established. The Palestinian people, with more than 8 million people, continue to suffer under Israel’s occupation of its territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif East Jerusalem, since 1967, and have been condemned to live in exile in refugee camps in the neighbouring Arab countries.

“The situation of the Palestinian people is of increasing concern. They are the target of Israeli attacks, including the most recent ones on Gaza, which were extremely violent. These attacks have destroyed its infrastructure and massacred thousands of children, youth, women and old men, as well as discredited the negotiation process and destroyed all peace efforts. The violence only strengthens the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories in flagrant violation of the

rights of the Palestinian people, who are deprived of their freedom of movement and whose homes are being demolished and whose assets are being seized. These practices are in violation of international law and lead us further away from a peaceful and just settlement of the situation in the Middle East. The practices of the colonizers aimed at undermining the efforts of the peace process hinder the Palestinian reconciliation efforts and threaten the results they have achieved, without which they cannot achieve a lasting peace.

“The African Union will continue to support the peace process in the framework of a solution advocated by the United Nations and the Arab Peace Initiative to establish a sovereign and independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif East Jerusalem.

“The African Union recalls that the broad outlines of a fair and lasting agreement have long been known. They are included in the Security Council resolutions, the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords, the Arab Peace Initiative, the road map and the conventions and agreements ratified by the two parties.

“The African Union will support all efforts aimed at allowing the Palestinian people to enjoy all of their rights. It calls on the international community to do everything possible to follow the path of peace to find a fair, lasting and comprehensive solution.”

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Fathalla** (League of Arab States) (*spoke in French*): I will now read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

“We meet every year on 29 November to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people, in accordance with resolution 32/40, of 1976, which established the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This occasion also coincides with the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, pursuant to resolution

68/12, of 2013. These two resolutions support the Palestinian efforts to establish a Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That would also enable justice to be finally achieved for the Palestinian people since the illegitimate forced partition of Palestine in 1947.

“We commemorate this day at a time when the Palestinian people have had to deal with a war imposed on them by the occupying Power in the form of an aggression on Gaza, during which Israel made use of all its weapons on land, sea and in the air, and which has resulted in widespread loss and destruction that did not spare even the buildings of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. That is the third attack of this nature on Gaza, which for more than seven years now has endured an illegal and harsh blockade. Following the example of other Palestinian territories, Gaza is still under occupation; it is not true that Israel withdrew from it in 2005, indeed it has laid siege to it on land, sea and from the air. And, as we know, the jailer does not live in the jail.

“Israel’s actions defy international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. Israel resounds with calls for war, racist epithets and disaffection vis-à-vis the plans for a two-State solution, which some Palestinian leaders say has essentially lapsed. Israel has also stated that it will not withdraw from the occupied territories as laid down in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), disdaining the international consensus for peace and an end to the occupation. The United States has attempted to implement the solution through negotiations that Israel has cut short.

“The Government of Israel has enacted a law aimed at strengthening Israel’s Jewishness. Despite the fact that Israel continues with its illegal practices against the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority, as represented by President Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, succeeded in achieving international recognition of Palestine when it became a non-member observer State of the United Nations two years ago today, on 29 November 2012 (resolution 67/19). Palestine’s demand was favourably received by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly, with 138 countries voting for the resolution.

“Today we are commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at a time when Israel’s contempt for international law and humanitarian law has exceeded all possible bounds, trampling on every international resolution, charter and rule. It has set little store by international public opinion in perpetrating massacres and atrocities against Palestinian civilians in its most recent attack on Gaza. These crimes are classified as war crimes and genocide, with 2,000 victims, 95 per cent of whom were women, children and elderly people. Ninety-one families have disappeared; 59 residential buildings, 145 public schools and 75 community schools have been destroyed — such schools being refuges for those who have had to flee their homes. Such attacks on community buildings were carried out despite the request of local officials that United Nations buildings be spared.

“Egypt’s efforts, supported by the Arab community, brought about a ceasefire. Egypt, together with Norway, held a conference on Palestine and the reconstruction of Gaza, welcomed by many countries and international organizations, which emphasized the importance of a complete lifting of the blockade. The occupying Power has continued with its policies of colonization, aimed at seizing Palestinian territory. Israel shields and protects the settlers, who commit acts of violence and terror against Palestinian civilians, and who have attacked churches, mosques and clerics and written racist slogans on buildings calling for death to all Arabs.

“We are also very concerned about the fate of Palestinian detainees, some of them women and children, held in inhumane conditions in Israeli prisons, revealing the racist face of the occupying Power, which is conducting extremist policies in order to change realities on the ground. Israel is taking illegal action aimed at Judaizing East Jerusalem, demolishing old houses, changing the demographic and cultural character of the city, eradicating the city’s history and concealing its Muslim and historical heritage. Numerous measures of that kind are being attempted, including in the Jordan valley, an economic region that would be a promising area for the State of Palestine.

“It is time for Palestine to attain its freedom. It is time for the Palestinian people to be able to live



like all the other peoples of the world. It is time for the international community to take steps to compel Israel to comply with its resolutions, including by implementing resolution 242 (1967) and the Arab Peace Initiative, which has been welcomed by the whole world as constituting a firm basis from which to put an end to this conflict and create a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Peace Initiative also includes measures aimed at resolving the issue of Palestinian refugees, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

“The Arab League supports the Palestinian leaders’ efforts, including their request for international protection for Palestinians in the occupied territories and East Jerusalem. I should also mention the Conference of States Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention held to study measures that would enable the Convention to be implemented in the occupied territories. We also support the Government of national unity and the efforts of the international community to give it every possible support. We must reject every attempt by Israel to weaken the Government of national unity and prevent it from doing its work.

“The Arab League will continue to support and defend the right of the Palestinian people to establish a State within the 1967 borders, through our backing of international organizations’ initiatives aimed at creating an independent Palestinian State, and including an effort in the Security Council to arrive at a timetable for Israel’s eventual withdrawal, in conformity with resolution 142 of the Council of Ministers of the Arab League. We welcome Sweden’s initiative in recognizing the State of Palestine, as well as the position of the British, Irish and Spanish Parliaments, which voted for recognition, and we call on all countries that have not taken such steps to recognize the Palestinian State.

“The Palestinian people have waited a long time to see their aspirations realized and for the creation of a free, independent, viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. It is our duty to unite in order to realize the hopes of a people who have been living with injustice for more than half a century, to protect them from destruction and the attempts to deprive them of their rights and to ensure that future

generations can live in safe, decent conditions. That will benefit the entire region and indeed the whole world. If we fail in our duty, neither history nor our consciences will forgive us. It is now the duty of the Security Council, responsible as it is for the maintenance of international peace and security, to take an executive decision that will establish a timetable for the withdrawal of the occupying Power, Israel, from the territories. That decision should affirm the borders of 1967 in order to put an end to this conflict.”

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I would ask Ambassador Fathalla to kindly convey to Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, the Committee’s sincere gratitude for his important message and his unfailing support of the Committee’s activities.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mark Koenig, co-Chair of the NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine, who will speak on behalf of civil society organizations with an active interest in the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Koenig** (NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine): On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine at the United Nations extends its greetings and affirms its desire for a reinvigorated and concerted effort to bring justice and peace to Palestine, Israel and the region. The Working Group is a coalition of diverse organizations that have met since 1999 to share information and advocate for a just peace between Israel and Palestine. The Working Group calls for an end to the occupation, supports the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and affirms that a just resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine should be in accord with all international, humanitarian and human-rights laws and agreements.

In resolution 68/12, of 26 November 2013, the General Assembly proclaimed 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. But this year has not brought the peace that Palestinians, Israelis and so many others seek. In sorrow, we acknowledge the violence and suffering that so many in the region have experienced throughout the year, and we urge the international community to intensify its efforts to move beyond the status quo to support a relationship between Israel and Palestine in which all people are equal under the law, enjoy the full exercise of their human rights, have access to just and inclusive governance and are free from fear and want.

Violence in any form and by any actor is anathema to peace. We call on all parties, States and non-State actors alike, to embrace and support non-violent approaches that can contribute to a just and sustainable peace for every child, woman and man in the region. It is for the people of the region themselves to agree together on the details of their political structures and governance. Nonetheless, the power imbalance between the States of Israel and Palestine is a major impediment to reaching a negotiated settlement. The international community, and in particular the United Nations, has a significant and necessary role to play in mediating and resolving this long-standing conflict, affirming the applicability of United Nations resolutions and of international laws and agreements and ensuring that the voices of the least powerful are heard. Common ground exists. With the support of the United Nations and the international community, the people of Palestine and Israel can forge a life together in peace with justice.

What kind of world do we want for the children and future generations of Palestine, Israel and all of us? A world of fear and violence, injustice and hatred? Or a world of freedom, peace and respect? May we choose well.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): We are grateful to Mr. Koenig for joining us on this important occasion. The Committee has followed his support for the peace process between Israel and Palestine with interest. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all civil-society organizations around the world that take an active interest in the question of Palestine for their work in support of and in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

It is now my honour to announce that the Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I would like to recall that the texts of the messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights, but I have the pleasant duty of reading out the list of those who sent them in the order in which they were received.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: His Majesty the King of Morocco, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Benin, His Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency the President

of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency the President of the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria, His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, His Highness the President of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar, His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Turkey, Her Excellency the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation, His Majesty the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Her Excellency the President of the Argentine Republic.

We have also received messages from the following Heads of Government: His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Belize, His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand and His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

The Committee has also received messages from the following Ministers for Foreign Affairs: His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lebanese Republic, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Tunisian Republic, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, His Royal Highness the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica and His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador.

We have received messages from the following Governments: the Government of Oman, the Government of Kazakhstan, the Government of Costa Rica and the Government of Nicaragua.

From intergovernmental organizations, the Committee has received messages from the European Union and His Excellency the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

From civil-society organizations, we have received messages from the Mennonite Central Committee and the NGO Working Group on Israel/Palestine.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and to the organizations that I have just mentioned, and to all participants for their persistent efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the mandated activities of this Committee.

I now have the honour to welcome the Secretary-General and to thank him for joining us at this special meeting. I give him the floor.

**The Secretary-General:** One year ago, the General Assembly declared 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. At the time, United States-facilitated negotiations on final-status issues between Israelis and Palestinians had resumed. The international community had re-engaged to support these efforts. Hope was visible.

Yet here we are — having passed through a sombre, sad and sorry year for Palestinians, Israelis and all who seek peace. Over the course of 50 brutal days this summer, the world witnessed another ruthless war in Gaza. It was the third such conflict in six years. What came of it? Nearly 2,200 Palestinians and 70 Israelis are dead. The homes of over 100,000 Palestinians in Gaza were destroyed or made unlivable. Gaza's critical infrastructure lies in ruins. Tens of thousands of Palestinians remain displaced. And for all their suffering, the people on both sides are nowhere nearer to lasting security.

I travelled to the region twice in recent months, first to help end the fighting, and secondly to see the aftermath and support the massive reconstruction efforts. I repeat here what I said in Gaza. I condemn the Hamas rocket attacks that indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians; they have brought nothing but suffering to all sides. I repeat here what I said in Israel. The scale of the destruction by the Israeli military has left deep questions about respect for the principles of distinction and proportionality and generated wide calls for accountability.

More — much more — must be done to protect civilians. More — much more — must be done to abide by international human rights and humanitarian

law. Long-term stability depends on addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. That means lifting the closure on Gaza, ending the half-century occupation of Palestinian land and addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

On this day of solidarity, our hearts turn to the many Palestine refugees who were disproportionately affected by the war in Gaza. The ongoing conflict in Syria also affects Palestine refugees, who have been in that country for decades. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a lifeline for millions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. I urge all donors to continue their strong support for UNRWA and for the reconstruction of Gaza.

I am pleased that the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has begun its operations. Material for urgent home repairs is the immediate priority. The United Nations is facilitating the Mechanism's implementation. Success depends on a conducive environment and the cooperation of all parties. It is also critical that donors immediately honour and disburse pledges made at the 12 October Cairo Conference on Palestine. Funding is desperately needed for vital infrastructure and addressing Gaza's acute electricity and water needs.

I am deeply troubled by the situation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Incitement and provocative acts related to the holy sites are fanning the flames of conflict far beyond the Holy City. I once again strongly condemn the reprehensible attacks against worshippers and other innocent civilians. Extremists on both sides are dictating the agenda. I call on all parties to stand up to those forces, exercise restraint and respect the status quo governing these holy sites.

I welcome the repeated assurances given by the Government of Israel to the international community. I also have repeatedly denounced Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem. International law is clear: Settlement activity is illegal. It runs counter to the pursuit of the two-State solution. I urge the Israeli Government to reverse these activities.

An end of the conflict will not be achieved through confrontation and violence. It will come only through a negotiated and just political solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. We, as the international community, must assume responsibility for what is a collective failure to advance a political

solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, as we see around the world, Governments and parliaments are taking action. That momentum will grow.

We cannot paper over the differences and the difficulties that we face today. The Israeli and Palestinian people face a shared fate on shared land. There can be no erasing of the other. Yet I fear deeply that with each passing day the people of the region are losing any sense of connection, empathy or mutual understanding of our common humanity and common future. When that goes, we are not far from going over the precipice.

The mindless cycle of destruction must end. The virtuous circle of peace must begin. On this International Day of Solidarity, I call on the parties to step back from the brink and find a path of peace before hope and time run out.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for finding room in his very crowded calendar to take part in today's meeting of the Committee, and would like to express the Committee's sincere gratitude for his important statement. We appreciate his continued efforts to promote a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor once again to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): I would first like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for being here and for his very clear and candid statement, and above all to thank him, on behalf of the Palestinian people and leadership, for his courage and understanding when he visited the Gaza Strip and saw with his own eyes the devastation that our people suffered as a result of the Israeli aggression this summer. We totally agreed with him then, as we do now, when he said he had no words to describe that devastation that the Palestinian people endured there. We appreciate his work and will continue to cooperate and work with him in advancing the cause of justice for the Palestinian people.

Earlier today, I read President Mahmoud Abbas's statement to those present. I would like to present the Secretary-General with a copy of that statement and reiterate our continued support in working with him to advance the cause of justice for the Palestinian people and of peace between us and our neighbours the Israelis.

I would also like to reiterate our gratitude and thanks to you, Sir, to the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to all those who made statements today in solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people. I would also like to thank all the Heads of State and Government, all the leaders from all corners of the world, as well as from international organizations and civil society, who have expressed their solidarity with our people today. And I thank all my colleagues and all those who have been in this room with us since this morning in demonstration of their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

We believe that 47 years of occupation is way too long. It is time for it to end, and it is time for all of us to translate into reality the collective will of the international community that calls for a two-State solution. For that to become a reality, Israel must withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, so that we can achieve independence for the State of Palestine and actualize the decision and position of all those here, led by the Secretary-General, that we should have a two-State solution. As President Abbas said in his address to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session (see A/69/PV.12), this is the year of independence for the State of Palestine. Let us collectively make it the year we see a two-State solution become a reality. We are very grateful to all those here for being with us and showing their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): Before adjourning this special meeting, I wish to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the staff members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information, the Office of Central Support Services, the interpreters and everyone who worked behind the scenes.

At 3 p.m. the General Assembly will begin its debate on the question of Palestine, during which I will introduce draft resolutions A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24 under that agenda item, and the Committee's Rapporteur will introduce the report of the Committee (A/69/35). We strongly encourage delegations to attend and support the adoption of the draft resolutions.

Together with Ambassador Mansour, I would also like to invite representatives this evening to the



opening of an exhibition entitled “The Long Journey”, on the lengthy voyage of the Palestinian people, which will take place at 6 p.m. in the Public Lobby of the General Assembly building. The exhibition is presented under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of the observer State of Palestine to the United Nations

and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The exhibition will be followed by a cultural event, a performance featuring Palestinian musicians, the Joubran Trio, from 7 to 8:30 p.m in this conference room. I look forward to seeing everyone this evening.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*