



# General Assembly

Seventy-second session

**59<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
 Wednesday, 29 November 2017, 3 p.m.  
 New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

## Agenda item 38

### Question of Palestine

**Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/72/35)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/368)**

**Draft resolutions (A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16)**

**The President:** We are here in this Hall today to discuss the question of Palestine. As the Assembly is aware, this item was placed on our agenda 70 years ago. The United Nations has changed a great deal since then. Its membership has more than tripled in size. It has led the evolution of international laws and norms. It has expanded through new agencies, funds and departments. Despite all of that change, the question of Palestine remains a question. And despite all of that change, the duty to resolve it remains as strong as ever. I want to make three main points today to frame our discussion.

First, there can be no alternative to direct talks. Over the past seven decades, a final agreement has at times seemed within reach. All those occasions had something in common — they happened only when Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had been in direct negotiations. This is not unique to the Palestinian situation; in fact, it has been a trend throughout history. The biggest breakthrough deals and agreements were

not made by shuffling messages across different borders, nor were they made in grand halls like this one. Rather, they came about when parties were in one room, around one table. So, while today's discussion and others like it play an important role, they must complement direct and meaningful talks that can lead to a two-State solution. This does not mean that the efforts of the international community should be discounted.

This brings me to my second point, which is that there is a continuing need for political support from international, regional and national actors. Such support can bring us closer to a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of the United Nations Special Envoy and his team, as well as that of the Middle East Quartet. International and regional tools for mediation and facilitation have led to some promising developments. Now is the time to recalibrate and strengthen them.

The international community has also rallied in response to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people, particularly those living in the Gaza Strip. Here I also want to emphasize the need for international and regional mediation in support of humanitarian access across the Middle East and in other parts of the world. I call for even stronger efforts to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and to secure access to people who are in humanitarian need.

Thirdly, positive momentum is building. We must maintain and increase it. I want to point in particular to progress with regard to intra-Palestinian reconciliation

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and Egypt's contribution in that connection. We should also see the recent three-day opening of the Raffa border crossing as a positive sign. Here, I should like to acknowledge the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of President Abbas to further progress. All of this momentum has been driven by diplomacy and dialogue, and only through diplomacy and dialogue can it be maintained and increased.

As I mentioned, the General Assembly placed the question of Palestine on his agenda in 1947. Since then, many discussions have been held; we have talked about problems and solutions, obstacles and possibilities, stalemates and opportunities. We have heard positions from all parties. We have called for action and we have expressed hope for the future. Yet we still have not answered the question of Palestine and, unfortunately, we are unlikely to answer it today. So what should we do? Call off today's discussion? Repeat our statements from last year and resign ourselves to hearing others do the same? If we do that, we fail in the task we set ourselves in 1947. More importantly, we fail the people on the ground.

So even though this item has been on our agenda for 70 years, I urge the Assembly to see today as a new opportunity, because it is an opportunity for dialogue. At any moment, dialogue can take a new course, uncover new scope for compromise and reveal a new way of seeing things.

This might be an old issue but it demands a new perspective, and it demands dialogue.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Senegal, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to sincerely thank all delegations and, in particular, you, Mr. President, for your active and engaged participation in this morning's special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The messages and statements of support delivered on this occasion confirm yet again the will of the international community to support the realization of the rights and the just aspirations of the Palestinian people.

In carrying out the mandate conferred on it by the Assembly, the Committee — which Senegal is honoured to chair — will continue to work to promote the rights of the Palestinian people and find a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in cooperation with all stakeholders: Member States, international organizations and civil society. In doing so, we will continue to base our efforts on dialogue and consultation with the two parties, Palestinian and Israeli.

We welcome the recent steps towards the restoration of Palestinian unity and hope they pave the way for comprehensive dialogue that will allow the Palestinian people to live side by side with the Israeli people in peace, security, dignity and justice. We will also continue over the coming months to encourage all Member States to support efforts under way towards a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations — of both the General Assembly and Security Council — and long-established parameters, including the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. Our shared goal should be to continue and step up diplomatic efforts to reach the ultimate objective of the solution of two States based on the borders of 1967.

I should now like to introduce the four draft resolutions already approved by the Committee and circulated under this agenda item: draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16. I note that regional consultations were held on these drafts.

The four draft resolutions relate, respectively, to the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, the activities of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information, and the call for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The first three draft resolutions reaffirm the important mandates entrusted to these entities by the General Assembly. I should like to highlight a few elements of these draft resolutions.

The draft resolution renewing the mandate of the Committee, contained in document A/72/L.15, requests our Committee, in the light of the passage of 50 years since the onset of the Israeli occupation and 70 years since the adoption of resolution 181 (II), on 29 November 1947, to, inter alia, redouble efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of

Palestine and for an expanded multilateral framework for the revitalization of peace efforts.

The second draft resolution, A/72/L.13, deals with renewing the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and requests the Secretary-General to provide the Division with the necessary resources.

The draft resolution on the special information programme of the Division for Public Information, A/72/L.14, renews the mandate of the Division aimed at continuing to encourage the media to create conditions propitious to peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

The fourth draft, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" and contained in document A/72/L.16, notes the General Assembly's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular its Goal 16, which has particular relevance for the question of Palestine.

The Committee hopes that, as in the past, these draft resolutions will receive strong support from the Assembly.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to introduce the Committee's report.

**Mr. Gertze** (Namibia): It is an honour, in my capacity as Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee, contained in document A/72/35. The report covers developments relating to the question of Palestine and details the work of the Committee between 4 October 2016 and 5 September 2017. Allow me to summarize each section of the report as follows.

Following the introduction, chapter II provides a review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine, as monitored by the Committee, in order to draw the attention of the international community to developments requiring urgent action, such as the impasse in the peace process, the tenth year of the Gaza Strip blockade, dire living conditions, ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities, adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), extrajudicial killings, excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying forces, heightened tensions at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in East Jerusalem and increasing house

demolitions and displacements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem.

In chapters III and IV, the report outlines the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contains information on the organization of the Committee's work during the year.

Chapter V details the actions taken by the Committee, including its participation in the Security Council debates and its continued dialogue with members of intergovernmental, interparliamentary, regional and civil-society organizations to mobilize support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The chapter also contains information about the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee and capacity-building trainings and workshops conducted for the staff of the Government of the State of Palestine, including within the framework of South-South cooperation, as well as other mandated activities.

Chapter VI provides an overview of the special information programme on the question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 71/22, of 30 November 2016.

The last chapter of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the General Assembly, which I would like to summarize. Recognizing that 2017 marks 70 years since the adoption of resolution 181 (II) to partition Palestine for the formation of two sovereign States and 50 years since the Israeli occupation began in 1967, the Committee, *inter alia*, has the following remarks to make.

First, it strongly urges the international community to redouble its efforts towards the achievement of the two-State solution, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Second, it welcomes an expanded multilateral framework, including key regional partners, with a view to reviving the peace process and establishing a credible political horizon for a comprehensive regional solution, such as offered by the Arab Peace Initiative.

Third, it reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to present his subsequent reports to the Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in a written format and to propose practical ways and means to hold Israel accountable for its illegal settlement activities and other violations. Fourth, it

offers its services in support to local, regional and international efforts to advance the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process.

Fifth, in recalling the upcoming seventieth anniversary of the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland in 1948 — remembered as the Nakba — the Committee strongly advocates for the Palestine refugees' right to return, as provided for in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), and encourages all Member States to work collectively to ensure sufficient and predictable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Sixth, the Committee demands an end to the 10-year-old Israeli air, land and sea blockade of Gaza and a lifting of all closures within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Seventh, it calls upon international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process.

Eighth, it reiterates that violations of humanitarian and human rights law must be investigated and perpetrators of such violations should be brought to justice. It urges States and private entities not to contribute to the grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, particularly with respect to settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

Ninth, the Committee urges Committee members, observer States and others to actively participate in its capacity-building programme for Palestinians, including within the framework of South-South and triangular cooperation and through voluntary contributions.

Tenth, it encourages civil-society partners to promote the achievement by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights and full recognition of the State of Palestine and its independence.

In closing, I would like to seek the support of my colleagues for the four draft resolutions endorsed unanimously by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): It is with a sombre spirit that we gather in the General Assembly today

in this debate on the question of Palestine, 70 years after the Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), on the decision to partition Palestine against the will and rights of the Palestinian people, which led to Al-Nakba in 1948. The infinite consequences of that decision continue to borne out in the injustices endured and witnessed to this day, as the Palestinian people are still being denied their rights, including to self-determination and to return, and a just, lasting and peaceful solution remains elusive. The pain of the anniversary is only slightly eased by the compelling solidarity messages conveyed to the Palestinian people and leadership on this day, reflecting the principled, unwavering support of countries around the globe. For that, we are deeply grateful on this, the fortieth commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Those affirmations of solidarity and support strengthen our resilience and resolve, even in the face of diminished hopes and the immense challenges that we continue to face, 100 years after the Balfour Declaration, 70 years after the Nakba and 50 years after the onset of Israel's military occupation over the remainder of Palestine and its vast repercussions and its impact on our people, on the region and on international peace and security.

As we are confronted with continued disappointment and devastation, that same support and solidarity have helped reinforce our conviction with regard to international law and the authority and ability of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the international community as a whole to uphold the law and their responsibilities to ultimately ensure the realization of our inalienable rights and a peaceful solution to this question, which has been on the United Nations agenda since the Organization's inception.

We are firm believers in international law and the inevitability of justice. If not, how could we come before the Assembly, year after year, especially on this tragic anniversary? Indeed, that conviction, along with a firm commitment to a peaceful solution and non-violent means to achieve it, remain at the heart of our resolutions and appeals to the international community. Remarkably, both — conviction and commitment — have withstood the many crises, setbacks and worsening conditions as Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to trample the law, to intensify its foreign occupation of our land and oppression of our people, and to reject peace.



Palestine's respect for United Nations resolutions is proven, and the Palestinian leadership has cooperated with every peace initiative for more than two decades, engaging in good-faith negotiations through every incarnation of the peace process. Israel, on the other hand, has undermined — and even at times sabotaged — all efforts to achieve the just solution that the Assembly has sought for decades, along with the Security Council, which just marked the fiftieth anniversary of its resolution 242 (1967) and which, in its most recent resolution — resolution 2334 (2016) — explicitly reaffirmed the terms of reference and parameters of this solution based on relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

In the Assembly's debate on this question last year (see A/71/PV.49), I expressed our hope that by now we would have achieved an end to the Israeli occupation and could gather in this Hall to finally celebrate the independence of the State of Palestine, the fulfilment of the rights and freedom of the Palestinian people, and the establishment of genuine peace, security and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. Instead, we must yet again confront Israel's deliberate contempt for the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions and international consensus in this regard.

Rather than allowing for progress towards a just and peace solution, Israel, the occupying Power, has purposely obstructed efforts and driven us further away from that objective. It has blatantly ignored the demands to cease its illegal policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and has proceeded non-stop with its settlement activities and systematic destruction of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. It has ignored the calls to reverse the negative trends on the ground and to act to bring an end to its occupation, as called for by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016).

The Israeli Government is not only violating that resolution, but actually brags about doing so, repeatedly declaring its illegal intentions and publicizing its crimes — even war crimes — without shame, all the while mocking the international community, including the Security Council, and exploiting the impunity granted to it in the absence of serious accountability measures.

Thus, in 2017 we again witness Israel quadrupling its settlement activities in all manifestations throughout the West Bank, especially in and around East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. It is persisting with its theft of Palestinian land; demolition of Palestinian homes and properties; forced displacement of Palestinian families and attempts at the forced transfer of entire Palestinian communities; and repression of the defenceless Palestinian civilian population, including by military force. It is causing death and injury to civilians, including children. It continues the arrest, detention, imprisonment, abuse and torture of thousands of civilians and the imposition of severe restrictions on movement and access and other freedoms and rights, including to education, health care, worship, development and water.

The most hideous of such restrictions remains Israel's illegal 10-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, where 2 million Palestinians are being collectively punished and inhumanely isolated and deprived, forced to endure a humanitarian crisis so dire that it is predicted that Gaza will be uninhabitable by humans by 2020 — but seemingly sooner than that, as revealed by alarming reports of the United Nations country team.

At the same time, Israeli settler violence and terror against Palestinians persist, and Israeli provocations, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric against the Palestinian people and leadership are on the rise, one reinforcing the other. Provocations also continue against holy sites, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, most notably at the Haram al-Sharif, where Israeli actions, witnessed again this summer, have repeatedly imperilled the status quo that has been in place for decades. Those actions threaten to completely destabilize an already tense situation, with potentially far-reaching consequences, including the ignition of a religious conflict.

Moreover, the Israeli Government, led by the most extreme members of the Prime Minister's coalition and aided and abetted by the Israeli justice system, has been feverishly advancing discriminatory laws and racist policies, further demeaning and dehumanizing the Palestinian people, rather than recognizing their rights to exist and to be free. It is advancing annexationist legislation, further entrenching this half-century-long occupation and facilitating Israel's schemes to acquire more territory by force, rather than ending these illegal actions. The reality is that Israel is in grave breach of all — not just some — of its obligations under

international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, as evidenced in its unlawful, destructive policies and actions in occupied Palestine.

The human toll of this unrelenting dispossession, military occupation and colonization is incalculable. Likewise, the occupation's toll on the viability of international law and the credibility of the international system is immeasurable; it long ago crossed the threshold of illegality and has caused enormous damage to the rule of law and to perceptions about justice, not just in our region, but worldwide.

In that connection, we recall the recent report of the Human Rights Council, entitled "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967" (see A/HRC/34/70), and the compelling findings regarding the applicable laws, relevant advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, and obligations of the occupying Power, as well as States, in this situation. The report reflects on the illegality of this prolonged, belligerent occupation as it persists in violation of the fundamental legal principles of occupation. That timely report requires serious follow-up as Israel continues violating international law, the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions, and impedes a peaceful solution as per the international consensus.

Each State represented here in the Assembly has the power to help bend the arc of history towards freedom, justice and peace. Each State has a political, legal and moral obligation to use that power. Many lament the ongoing colonization of the State of Palestine, denial of the human rights of the Palestinian people and destruction of the two-State solution and peace prospects, often wondering what more they can do. We believe that each State can and should do the following — among other things — to remedy this unjust situation and contribute to its peaceful solution.

First, each State can and should uphold international law as it applies to the question of Palestine, including through support for relevant resolutions in international and regional forums, notably in the United Nations, and by mobilizing the political will necessary to actually implement those resolutions.

Secondly, States should affirm their support for the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights, including through the adoption of principal positions regarding Palestine at the United Nations and in other international and regional frameworks. They should

recognize the State of Palestine along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as an investment in peace, and they should provide human, development, economic, financial and technical support to ensure the strengthening and viability of Palestinian Government institutions and civil society. They should also provide support for the well-being and dignity of the Palestine refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, pending a just solution to their plight in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

Thirdly, States should ensure that they are not in any way complicit with Israel's illegal actions, including through non-recognition of the unlawful situation created by Israeli policies and measures in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, including as a result of the settlements and the wall. States should not render aid or assistance in maintaining that unlawful situation, and they should distinguish between the territory of the occupying Power and the occupied territory.

Fourthly, States should ensure accountability, including through practical measures to implement the provisions of relevant United Nations resolutions. They should ensure respect for the Charter and for obligations under international humanitarian law as high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions. States should provide support for the activation of international accountability mechanisms and should enact their decisions and recommendations; link bilateral relations with Israel to its commitment to international law and the advancement of peace; and undertake measures to hold the Israeli Government and Israeli organizations and individuals accountable for their actions at the political, diplomatic, economic and financial levels.

Such efforts, along with the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on the ground, the active role of the United Nations and the role of civil society, should finally lead us to the day when we can stop commemorating this tragedy and instead begin peacebuilding for a better, more stable, prosperous and secure future for generations to come — a far better investment for the international community than the perpetuation of this conflict.

It is a simple equation. The occupation will continue as long as its benefits outweigh its cost. Israel's disregard for the law and for the United Nations could not have been possible without the impunity

it has been accorded for so long. That contempt has found its ultimate expression in Israel's brazen response to Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which provided a clear compass towards peace and yet which Israel systematically breaches — like all prior resolutions — without consequence. That must change. Israel cannot continue to be treated as a law-abiding member of the international community while it tramples the law. True pursuit of accountability can change that.

The permanent responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States to redress this injustice and promote a just solution based on international law can therefore in no way be considered as a biased or one-sided approach to this conflict. That is not the problem, as falsely claimed by Israel and those who try to absolve it of its crimes. The real problem is the fact that, despite the clarity and authority of international positions, accountability continues to be delayed at best and denied at worst. Double standards persist, and Israel continues to be rewarded rather than punished for its illegal behaviour. That must end, and immediate action is required from Governments and civil society alike.

In this regard, we renew our appreciation to all members and observers of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their commitment to uphold the law and obligations towards the question of Palestine and to support the realization of the Palestinian people's rights and legitimate national aspirations to live in freedom, dignity and stability in their homeland and to positively engage in international efforts to achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive peace in which the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, can live side by side with Israel based on the pre-1967 borders and in lasting peace and security.

The Committee's efforts are in full conformity with relevant resolutions, the Charter and all other relevant rules and principles of international law. We urge Member States to cooperate with and support the Committee in its work towards attainment of those urgent objectives.

We thank Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal, Chair of the Committee, for his leadership, and we thank Senegal for taking on that important role over the years. We thank Ambassador Seck for his introduction of the draft resolutions under this item. We also thank the Rapporteur, and Vice-Chair Ambassador Neville Melvin

Gertze of Namibia for introducing the Committee's annual report (A/72/35). We thank all other Bureau members — Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua — as well as all Committee members and observers for their principled support.

We also renew our appreciation to the Division for Palestinian Rights and to the Department of Public Information for its special information programme on Palestine for their support to the Committee. We also express our thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his report on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/72/368) and his leadership of the broad United Nations efforts vis-à-vis the question of Palestine.

We reiterate our appreciation for the work of his Special Representative and United Nations Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, and his team, and for the tireless efforts of the many United Nations agencies assisting the Palestinian people: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; UNICEF; the United Nations Development Programme; the World Food Programme; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the World Health Organization; UN-Women; the United Nations Population Fund; the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements; the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and the United Nations Mine Action Service.

With the generous support of States, organizations and partners from around the world, that humanitarian, socioeconomic, development and moral support has helped sustain the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian refugees, throughout decades of conflict, and it remains vital until a just solution is achieved.

The people of Palestine will not disappear, nor will they surrender to a dismal fate. They have proudly stood alongside many in this Hall in their own struggles for independence and freedom, and are grateful that they continue to stand with them today. They want peace and are ready for peace, but peace cannot coexist with injustice, occupation, colonization and apartheid. The people of Palestine have decided to be law-abiding even when the law has failed to protect them and failed to hold accountable those committing crimes against them. They have overcome despair against all odds time and again, while preserving their humanity and tolerance. Despite such adversity, they continue to

believe that freedom and justice are inevitable, and that peace is possible. And so should everyone present here today. Let us work together to make that a reality.

**Mr. Danon (Israel):** Every day at the United Nations, the countries of the world make choices — hard choices. With every resolution we adopt and with every vote we cast, we choose between war and peace, progress and decay, and hope and despair.

Whether we intend them to or not, our choices, for better or for worse, will impact countless lives. Today the United Nations has made a choice. The nations of the world represented in this Hall have chosen once again to debate the so-called question of Palestine. Today, as representatives return to these same seats within this same forum, they will take turns targeting Israel. They will vote on empty draft resolutions against Israel, and in November 2018, on this very day — one that the world should celebrate — they will try to isolate Israel once again.

The date of 29 November marks a pivotal moment of choice. It is the anniversary of the United Nations vote in 1947 that would determine the fate of two peoples. For one of those peoples, it was a moment that turned an age-old dream of self-determination into a real-life miracle. For the other, the result of the vote triggered an aggressive and lasting hatred.

In the General Assembly in 1947, in what is now the main hall of the Queens Museum, Zionist representatives ran from one diplomat to another. One by one, we made our case. We explained why resolution 181 (II) was so crucial for the Jewish people, and why adopting the resolution, which called for creating a Jewish State in the Jewish homeland, was non-negotiable. As the voting started, Jews across the world crowded around radios to tally the vote. One eyewitness recalls that the vote, which lasted only three minutes, felt like the length of the Jewish exile. On that day in 1947, the United Nations made the right choice — a choice to correct a historic wrong, a choice that welcomed the establishment of a Jewish State in the land of Israel, and a choice that would give Israel a new platform and a new opportunity to do the most good. On that same day, Jews and Arabs had the chance to build successful and prosperous communities. The Jews said yes, but the Arabs said no.

Despite all we have been through and all the calls to wipe us off the map, Israel has chosen the path of prosperity and peace. For the past 70 years, our small

country of just 8 million people has chosen to dream big. We have worked to help others, and always seek to repair the world. For the Palestinians, however, it has been the exact opposite. I wish that that were not the case. I wish that I could stand here today and assure the Assembly that the Palestinian leadership wants prosperity and peace, but since that critical vote in 1947 the Palestinians have done nothing but try to harm Israel.

The Palestinians are not anti-Israel because of borders or Governments. They are anti-Israel because of who we are. The Palestinians have never accepted the existence of a Jewish State in the Holy Land, and they do not accept it today. Through every lie that it spreads and through every life that it takes, the Palestinian leadership always blames the situation on us — on Israel — but never, not even once, has the Palestinian leadership tried to improve the lives of its own people. Palestinian leaders incite their teenagers to commit terror attacks against Israeli citizens. They exploit their international aid to build monuments for convicted terrorists. They abuse those funds to pay terrorists and their families monthly salaries for killing Israelis. The payments start at \$3,000, and they only go up from there. And that is not all. The Palestinians have the audacity to lie about it.

Although they say — and the Assembly has just heard — that they want peace and that there would be peace if it were not for Israel, in reality they are the ones who embrace terror. They are the ones who choose to kill. I propose the following to the Palestinians. For every \$1,000 they choose to spend on terrorists and their families, what would happen if they spent that money on a Palestinian high-tech start-up? What if they sponsored a Palestinian student to study rather than to slay? What if they built cultural centres instead of terror monuments, and what if they used all that money that they receive from other countries for development rather than destruction?

The Palestinians make such choices every day. They have the opportunity to change the course of their choices towards progress, peace and prosperity, or they can continue on the path of devastation and despair. Sadly, they have done the latter. From 1947 to 2017, the Palestinians have rejected every opportunity for peace. I will give one example.

In 2005, the Palestinians once again could have made the right choice. They had that opportunity when



Israel unilaterally pulled out of Gaza. We walked away and gave the Palestinians the chance for self-determination in Gaza. For those who do not know, Gaza hugs the Mediterranean Sea. It could have been the next beach resort destination of the Middle East, a beautiful location. Instead, 12 years after Israel completely left, there are no settlements, no occupation in Gaza. Twelve years after Israel left, Gaza has become a haven for terror.

The current state in Gaza cannot be blamed on the Europeans, the Americans, the Arabs or the Israelis. It was a self-inflicted wound. So long as Hamas uses innocent Palestinians as human shields and deprives them of their basic human rights, Gaza will remain imprisoned by its own brutal leaders. Hamas terrorists still try to destroy our cities. When construction materials arrive in Gaza, they are not used to build schools and housing. Instead, Hamas uses them to build its terror infrastructure. Hamas terror tunnels continue to be discovered underneath United Nations facilities, under schools, hospitals and mosques, and those tunnels are used for one purpose: to kidnap and kill Israelis.

Hamas has made a choice to never accept our right to exist. But the Palestinian Authority chose too. As the latest of their bad choices, they finally said yes. They finally chose to negotiate and even signed an agreement — but not with Israel. The Palestinian Authority has finally said yes to working with Hamas. It is the only choice in which they have not said no. The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, did not hesitate when he said, “Hamas is not and will never be a terrorist organization to us”. That is right. Hamas is an internationally recognized terrorist organization, but in the eyes of the Palestinian leadership, it is the exact opposite.

Today, in 2017, this is where we stand. Seventy years after that critical moment in history, that crucial choice to either progress or regress, we still have no partner for peace, unfortunately. Israel can negotiate only with a partner that lays down its weapons and respects our right to existence. The only thing that should not exist and that has no right to exist is the question over Israel’s existence. What the Palestinians do not realize is that when they try to harm us, they are actually harming themselves. While we discover solutions to save lives, they direct their people to end lives. While we surge towards the future, they shove their people into the past. If the Palestinians had made the right choice and simply said yes, then we could have worked together.

We could have partnered together with our big dreams. We could have had prosperity and peace.

However, Israel does not lose hope. We are still ready to negotiate, ready to find a solution. While we wait for that moment, Israel will not waste time. We have chosen the path of prosperity and peace. We have built a vibrant democracy, in which all of our citizens — Jews, Muslims, Druze Christians — enjoy equal rights and the protection of the law. Under Israel’s watch, our people are free. Under Israel’s leadership, our hearts and minds are open. We seek peace and we dream big. Each day that passes, Israel chooses to empower more people, save more lives and build for the future. Our democracy is stable and our economy is growing. Every eight hours — by the time we finish this debate — a new start-up emerges. At every opportunity possible, we share with our fellow nations what we have learned. There is work to be done and we can only move forward.

The Palestinians will not better themselves by worsening us. It is about time that they made the right choice. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose prosperity. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose partnership. At the end of the day, Israel will always choose peace.

**Mr. Albanai** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we are discussing, as we do every year, the question of Palestine, 70 years after the General Assembly adopted its first resolution on the issue, resolution 181 (II). Kuwait has a principled stance, and the mainstay of our policies is to support the question of Palestine. That has been proved by the decisions we have made every year, as we continue to support our Palestinian brothers and try to alleviate their suffering. We also advocate for their fundamental freedoms and rights and for putting an end to the Israeli occupation and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

There is a host of United Nations resolutions and other international resolutions on the question of Palestine. Perhaps the purport of all those resolutions is support for the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, however, Israel’s intransigence has created a number of obstacles that have hindered any concrete progress since the occupation began in 1967. Half a century has passed since Israel began its illegal and unethical practices in Palestine. Two generations of Palestinian

young people have witnessed that occupation, and they can only dream of breaking free from its shackles.

The savage policy of the Israeli authorities has been renewed, as they attempt to force a demographic change in the Palestinian territories through forcible displacement, expropriation of land and property and expanding their settlements. In addition to that and adding insult to injury, there has been transgression against the Holy Mosque, thereby depriving Muslims of their religious practices.

The State of Kuwait supports all efforts of the international community to find a fair and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine, which should be based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the rules established by international law and United Nations resolutions. In that regard, we welcome the French initiative that calls for an international peace conference with a multilateral international mechanism as its outcome, one that would pave the way to end all settlement activities. That would totally end the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine according to specific frameworks that would eventually also ensure the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to build their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 4 June 1967 boundaries.

We must understand that the policies and practices imposed on the Palestinians by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories — including the illegal settlement activities and the blockade on the Gaza Strip, which has been in force since 2007, the restrictions on the movement of persons and goods and the expropriation of land — are all aimed at undermining any chance for a two-State solution and at entrenching the Israeli occupation. In addition, we underscore that it is of paramount importance to implement Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns all Israeli practices that aim to expand the settlements, confiscate land, demolish houses and displace the Palestinians.

*Mr. Sauer (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Against that backdrop, we would like to recall the principled position of the State of Kuwait on the question of Palestine. That issue has always been a priority item at the United Nations, as it reflects the cause of a people who have suffered for decades from the occupation and have been deprived of their most fundamental rights. Allow me to summarize our position.

First, we commend the Palestinian people's stoicism and struggle. The State of Kuwait reaffirms its principled commitment to support them until they attain all their legal and political rights, in particular the establishment of an independent State on their territory with East Jerusalem as its capital. We are in favour of setting a deadline for the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories, in accordance with international law and practices.

Secondly, we condemn the continuation of the inhumane and illegal blockade imposed on Gaza, which is a violation, among so many others by Israel, of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 1860 (2009), and of Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We call for the immediate end of the blockade.

Thirdly, we call on the international community, through the United Nations organs, in particular the Security Council, to provide international protection to the Palestinian people, who are defenceless against the Israeli war machine, and to put an immediate end to the occupation.

Fourthly, we renew our call on all the parties concerned, especially the sponsors of the peace process in the Middle East, to intensify their efforts to pressure Israel to accept the resolutions of the United Nations. We reiterate the responsibility of the United Nations and its bodies with regard to the question of Palestine until there is a lasting, equitable and comprehensive settlement of all the relevant issues, including that of refugees.

As a member of the General Assembly, I urge us all today, as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — and we also urge the Security Council — to assume our responsibilities and support the Palestinian people and their just cause, as that is incumbent upon all of us. We must support the people, who have long waited for the United Nations to achieve something in connection with the chronic Palestinian cause. We must work together to bring Israel to end its flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories and to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions with regard to a sustainable and just two-State solution. That would have very positive ramifications for peace and security in the Middle East region.

**Mr. Belkheir (Libya)** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli occupation of Palestine is a crisis no longer confined to

the historical borders of the State of Palestine, or to the region itself. The crisis has become part and parcel of the history of the United Nations. The United Nations is an organization that is supposed to ensure justice and act in favour of all oppressed people and end occupation and maintain international peace and security. However, what has the United Nations done in reality for the Palestinian people, a people who have a just cause, as attested to in all reports of the United Nations and in those of other international organizations?

The United Nations has adopted many resolutions on the question of Palestine. However, the Israeli occupation has flouted each and every one of them. It is ironic that this is the same Organization that created the State of Israel and legitimized its occupation, in accordance with a promise given by a State that had no right to make such a promise. The United Nations has adopted many resolutions calling on the State it had itself established to end its occupation.

Fifty years into the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, it has become incumbent upon the international community and the Organization to uphold their historical and ethical responsibility and to admit that Israel, the occupying Power, will not end its occupation. The international community has put pressure on the Arab world and tried to convince it to abandon its historical right to establish the State of Palestine and to accept all international initiatives. The Arab world has shown good faith and presented the Arab Peace Initiative, based on international resolutions and the principle of land for peace. However, Israel, the occupying Power, has never reciprocated.

The United Nations must admit that fact, since Israel will never reconsider its policies. Israel continues its occupation and tries to play for time, while adopting many Judaizing policies that will lead only to complete chaos in the region and beyond.

The occupying Power has continued its policies of excessive use of violence. It has also introduced a new element into the equation, namely, armed Israeli settlers, in order to provoke the rightful owners of the land. That is an attempt to portray the situation as a conflict among civilians of different nationalities and religions. Such attempts will lead only to further deterioration. Israel must understand that such tactics do not serve anyone's interests.

It is high time for the international community to act, if it is serious about ending the most heinous

form of occupation. It should adopt targeted policies, including suspending Israel from the membership of the Organization and offering international protection to Palestinian civilians, who are so desperate that they no longer differentiate between life and death.

We must answer to future generations for this occupation. If we do not, the occupation will continue until it engulfs all Palestinian territories and all other Arab territories. I would like to refer the Assembly to a statement by the so-called Minister for Social Equality in Israel, who, two days ago, said, "the best place for Palestinians to establish their State is Sinai". This is a dangerous statement that reflects the general political atmosphere in Israel, which is based on a belief of a promised land for a chosen people. It justifies Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan as another step towards making its Israeli dream come true. Will the international community stand by and allow Israel to continue its occupation for another 50 years?

Israel's illegal policies in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, continue unabated. I will not go into examples, as there are many of those in the reports of the Secretary-General and other United Nations reports. However, until the Palestinian people are able to establish their own free and independent State, the United Nations must promote Palestinian reconciliation and provide all forms of support to the Palestinian Government in order to improve the living conditions of Palestinian civilians.

The international community must continue to pressure Israel to accept the Arab Peace Initiative and find a just solution to the issue of refugees and end the settlement activities, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2334 (2016), and other international resolutions. The international community must also recognize Palestine as a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations. It must also consider the question of Palestine as a responsibility because we as an international Organization have contributed to the success of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and left the Palestinians unprotected in facing the resulting challenge.

In conclusion, some might say that Libya should not make such a statement on the issue of Palestine while it suffers from its own internal security struggles. I would like to note that the question of Palestine will always remain a priority for all Arab nations and all Arab citizens because we are well aware that this

unjust occupation is the main reason for the spread of terrorism and extremism in the Middle East.

**Ms. Rasheed** (Maldives): At the outset, I wish to reiterate the unwavering support of the Government and the people of Maldives for the Government and the people of the State of Palestine as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Maldives will continue to stand by the Government and the people of Palestine in their struggle for justice, peace, stability and prosperity.

This year marks 50 years since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Next year, 2018, will mark the seventieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of Palestine and the Arab lands, which caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

The continued illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel is an enormous blemish on the image of the United Nations, one that continues to hurt the Organization's efforts to make peace around the world. The question of Palestine has but one answer, namely, the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on Palestinian lands within the pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel. That is the answer that the Security Council demands, in particular in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016). The Maldives therefore calls on Israel to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions in their entirety, fully respect the legal obligations it undertook in the Oslo Accords and carry out the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

Yet even today, we see in Israel a complete and total disregard for the United Nations resolutions and international agreements to which it is a signatory. The country, in violation of its commitments under the Oslo Accords to treat Gaza and the West Bank as a single territorial unit reserved for the Palestinian State, continues to designate the West Bank by another name and considers it as part of Israel. In its laws, official statements, media — in practice, then — Israel does not recognize the right of a sovereign and practicable Palestinian State to exist. The day that Israel makes the strategic decision to choose peace instead of semantics and technical challenges to the peace plans will be the day when we will be able to embark upon the path to a

lasting peace process that will bring about a permanent solution to the conflict.

What else is expected in this case? What else are the people to feel when their hopes, aspirations and prayers — and indeed their rights — are dismissed and trampled upon time and time again? We know that sustaining peace requires the rule of law, respect for human rights, representative institutions and so forth. Why, then, do we continue to effectively hold the case of the Israeli occupation to a double standard?

International law is not selectively applicable, nor can its violations be justified or excused. As we, the international community, call for peace and a lasting solution to the question of Palestine, we must also denounce efforts to achieve peace through apartheid, in the guise of semi-autonomy.

All that is fundamentally necessary for Israel to do is to join the international community at long last in affirming the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people and cease its occupation of their territory, while also recognizing an independent and sovereign Palestinian State. If that can be achieved, we will have come a long way in achieving the elusive goal of peace in the Middle East and a lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

**Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting, as well as the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his statement and for all the efforts made by the Committee. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the efforts made by the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information.

This year marks the passage of 50 years since 1967, when the illegal Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, began. The legal and humanitarian consequences of the occupation have of course created the need to implement all international laws and resolutions that seek to bring about an end to the illegal Israeli occupation.

Despite the many challenges to achieving peace in the Middle East, important recent developments have taken place that increase the hope of achieving peace and reconciliation in Palestine and in the Middle East.



Qatar welcomes the signing of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement, which is an important step towards reconciling all Palestinian factions for the benefit of the Palestinian people. We hope that those developments will contribute to peace efforts.

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, the State of Qatar once again stresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for all international efforts aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. In that regard, we reiterate Qatar's support for a two-State solution that would establish two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security, within the internationally recognized 1967 borders. Israel must therefore end its occupation and grant the Palestinian people their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. We must also find a solution to the issue of refugees, pursuant to resolution 194 (III).

We also stress that to achieve peace we must uphold international law and provide an environment that is conducive to peace and security and avoid any escalation. We once again condemn the occupying Power's violations, including those aimed at holy sites, in particular any attempts to change the legal status of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque or at dividing it temporally or spatially.

The General Assembly adopts annual resolutions on the Middle East and the question of Palestine. Those resolutions reflect the seriousness with which the international community addresses the issue. The international community calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to end its unilateral occupation of the State of Palestine, which is in violation of international law. Such policies aim to change the legal and demographic status of Palestine. The resolutions also reiterate the invalidity of the measures taken by Israel in its occupation of the Syrian Golan and call upon Israel to withdraw to the borders of 4 June 1967.

The Middle East is facing a number of challenges as a result of conflict and confrontation, with negative impacts on the people of the region. We must therefore redouble our efforts to address the root causes of the conflicts and crises, especially terrorism and extremism. Moreover, the emergence of new crises in the region would lead to further complications and instability.

In conclusion, in order to achieve peace in the Middle East, the State of Qatar will continue to support

the legal rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international resolutions. We will continue our efforts to put an end to crises and conflicts in the region, based on our foreign policy to settle all conflicts and disputes peacefully.

**Mr. Bamgbose** (Nigeria): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting on the situation in the Middle East, particularly the question of Palestine. This meeting provides an opportunity for reflection on developments in the region as a whole.

Nigeria is gravely concerned about the situation in many parts of the Middle East. Accordingly, we call on all parties to make genuine efforts to find peaceful solutions and cooperate closely with the United Nations and its relevant agencies to realize that objective. In its effort to seek avenues for advancing the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question, the international community remains focused on paving the way for Israel and Palestine to return to meaningful negotiations.

Nigeria believes that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine is imperative for the attainment of durable peace and stability in the Middle East. That is why we are pleased to note the statement by the Middle East Quartet on 28 September, which welcomed the efforts of the Palestinians to create the conditions for the Palestinian Authority to assume its responsibilities in Gaza and stressed the importance of close and continuing coordination of all efforts to achieve the common goal of the two-State solution, in line with United Nations resolutions and international law. We also acknowledge the outcome of the Paris Conference held on 15 January, at which 70 countries and international organizations reaffirmed their support for the two-State solution and their readiness to continue to encourage both Israel and Palestine to return to purposeful negotiations.

The Israeli-Palestinian question may be long-standing, and the situation in the Middle East may be complex. However, the international community must remain undaunted in its commitment to finding lasting and sustainable solutions, as the conflict continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. As is widely acknowledged, the inherent difficulty in the Middle East peace process is the apparent lack of progress. In that context, we urge all parties to show greater commitment to making peace a reality. All unilateral actions that have turned hope into

confrontation, including settlement activities, violence and inciting violence, must stop.

Nigeria would like to see a genuine effort on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to the negotiating table. Obviously, the current situation does not offer a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine. Indeed, it is creating despair among the people of Palestine and causing anxiety among the people of Israel. We believe that numerous specific actions are necessary for the fostering of mutual respect and compromise and for building confidence so as to pave the way for the realization of the two-State solution.

In that regard, Nigeria encourages Israel to take concrete measures to freeze all settlement-related activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. For their part, Palestinian leaders must also signal their readiness to return to the negotiating table by enhancing their efforts to forge unity and deal with militancy and other internal security challenges. It is beyond doubt that neither military might nor militancy will resolve this protracted conflict.

In conclusion, we encourage both sides to take concrete steps to return to negotiations on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Quartet road map, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and other relevant agreements between the parties. Nigeria supports the efforts of the international community aimed at establishing an enabling environment that is conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation and resolve this long-running conflict.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to make a statement with regard to “The situation in the Middle East” and “Question of Palestine”, agenda items 37 and 38, respectively, which my country follows with concern.

Seventy years have passed since the establishment of a State of Israel and the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which established the Partition Plan for Palestine, and 50 years have passed since the beginning of Israeli occupation. We would like to reiterate once again our strongest support for a peaceful, definitive and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine on the basis of a two-State solution within the borders of 1967 and whatever the parties decide upon during the negotiation process.

Argentina actively supports all efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the Middle East. We urge stakeholders in the region and countries that are friends of Israel and Palestine to work constructively to help the parties to move towards settling their differences with a view to resuming negotiations. The gravity of the situation on the ground requires a common effort in order to work for a two-State solution, as established by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Argentina reiterates its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establishing an independent and viable State recognized by all nations, as well as the right of the State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders. Accordingly, Argentina reiterates its concern about the persistent and continuous growth of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and calls for an end to their expansion. As the General Assembly has repeatedly indicated, the settlements are contrary to international law, obstruct peace, weaken the prospect of a two-State solution of States living in peace and security and therefore promote the perpetuation of an unsustainable status quo.

The seriousness of the situation has recently been recognized by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016). At the same time, the attacks against Israeli citizens are unacceptable and must cease immediately. My country condemns in the strongest terms all terrorist acts and is convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict, nor is there a solution that can be imposed by terrorist means. Palestinian leaders must sincerely address Israeli security concerns.

In that regard, Argentina places great hope in the agreement signed in Cairo on 12 October, which could be a very important step in achieving genuine progress on Palestinian reconciliation. We hope that the agreement also succeeds in moving towards the recognition of Israel, the rejection of violence and respect for the existing agreements by all Palestinian factions. We acknowledge the positive role of Egypt and call on all the actors involved in the situation in Gaza to refrain from taking measures that could undermine the prospects for a Government of Palestinian Unity. We note with concern the continuing excessive use of force by Israeli forces in the context of attacks and alleged

attacks by Palestinians and in clashes and violent acts by settlers.

With regard to the situation in East Jerusalem, Argentina highlights the special status of Jerusalem in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and therefore rejects any unilateral attempt to modify it, in particular with regard to the Old City, which has special meaning for the three great monotheistic religions. My country believes that the Holy City should be a place of coming together and peace, and that free access to the holy sites must be guaranteed for Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. Any attempt to deny or diminish the importance of the historical link and the profound meaning of those places for the three religions is completely unacceptable, does not contribute to the objective of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict and reinforces negative prejudices and mistrust between the parties.

With regard to the Syrian Golan, Argentina maintains a principled position on the illegal acquisition of territories by force and on respect for the territorial integrity of States. We firmly believe in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, and we consider it important to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel, with a view to putting an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights as soon as possible, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

To conclude, Argentina would like once again to urge Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks while acting in good faith, with flexibility and in accordance with international law, with a view to reaching an agreement on outstanding issues concerning the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

**Mr. Vieira** (Brazil): As the international community celebrates the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People today, Brazil wishes to reiterate its full support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Brazil deeply regrets that, exactly 70 years after the adoption of resolution 181 (II), during the session presided over by a Brazilian, Mr. Oswaldo Aranha, the then-President of the General Assembly at its second session and former Foreign Minister of Brazil, the Palestinian right to a sovereign and independent State has not yet been fulfilled.

Brazil believes that a fair and lasting solution to the conflict can be achieved only through a two-

State solution, leading to an economically viable and territorially contiguous Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, within internationally recognized and mutually agreed borders, based on the 1967 lines, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the established guidelines of the peace process, including the Madrid principles, the Oslo Accords, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, inter alia.

Without prejudice to the fundamental responsibility of the Security Council, we underscore that the General Assembly can, and should, contribute to the implementation of the two-State solution in all its aspects. The annual draft resolutions of the Assembly on the situation in the Middle East and on the question of Palestine, including those to be adopted this year, represent an important aspect of the international framework for the peaceful solution of the dispute. The resolutions reaffirm the validity of crucial legal parameters, including the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, the applicability of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories, the Palestinian refugees' right of return, and the need for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Jerusalem, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians and ensuring unhindered access to the holy places. We urge all parties to fully abide by the resolutions in good faith.

In accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, we reject the acquisition of territory by the use of force. In 1967, as an elected member of the Security Council, Brazil actively supported and participated in the drafting of resolution 242 (1967), which demands the withdrawal by Israel from Arab territories occupied during the 1967 conflict. The existence and expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestine, as well as the retroactive legislation on some of the settlements, constitute an obstacles to the viability of the two-State solution, and therefore undermines peace in the region. Having welcomed Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), Brazil stresses the need to implement all aspects of that binding resolution, which is an important contribution to the international legal framework on the question of Palestine.

Significant steps have been taken recently towards the political reunification of the State of Palestine, which is an important element of the peace process.

Brazil welcomed the agreement signed in Cairo on 12 October, as well as the measures designed to extend the authority of the Government of National Consensus to the Gaza Strip. We thank Egypt for its role in the negotiations and encourage the Palestinian political groups to continue their dialogue. We hope that the Cairo agreement will help to alleviate the grave humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip immediately by facilitating the lifting of the blockade and allowing unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We also expect the agreement to be a positive factor in the efforts to resume direct and meaningful peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Several of the draft resolutions to be adopted by the Assembly concern the specific rights and needs of Palestinian refugees and the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As a member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, Brazil would like to reiterate its resolute support to the Agency, which offers education, health care, housing, food assistance, psychosocial support and other important forms of humanitarian and development assistance to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in the region. As a concrete expression of its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people, Brazil has recently increased its aid to Palestinian refugees through voluntary financial contributions and regular food assistance and by implementing social development projects, including those of the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation in Gaza and the West Bank.

In 2010, Brazil recognized the State of Palestine within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, a decision consistent with the principle of self-determination and also aimed at supporting the peace process. In that same spirit, today we reaffirm our collective responsibility for renewing serious and meaningful negotiations towards a two-State solution.

**Mr. Kawamura** (Japan): I thank the President for convening this important meeting, and I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Today the Middle East and North Africa face a multitude of challenges, from the question of Palestine, an issue that has existed since the United Nations

began, to more recent regional problems such as Syria and Yemen. Mutual distrust still seems to prevail, and the outlook for the region remains murky. As a member of the Security Council for the past two years, Japan has striven to deal with regional issues on a day-to-day basis. We have consistently emphasized the importance of resolving conflicts peacefully, implementing international commitments, including Security Council resolutions, promoting confidence-building and focusing on humanitarian assistance and enhancing social resilience.

With regard to the question of Palestine, the future envisaged in resolution 181 (II), a two-State future, has not yet been realized. Obstacles to peace persist. The settlement activities continue in violation of international law, and Japan calls on Israel to freeze them immediately. Settlement activities create facts on the ground and physically erode the possibility of a two-State solution. Violence remains a major threat to peace. The escalation of tensions at the holy sites this summer was a stark reminder of how a case of violence can snowball into a larger crisis. Japan condemns all acts, incitements and glorification of violence as fundamentally incompatible with the peaceful resolution of conflicts. We call on both sides to take concrete steps to reverse those negative trends. On the ground, reconciliation efforts among the Palestinians continue. To achieve a State of Palestine under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian National Authority, it will be important to continue to encourage the implementation of the agreement signed in Cairo on 12 October.

The General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions related to this topic during this session. However, we should not be satisfied. The situation calls for action that can have an impact on the ground, both from the parties and the international community, and Japan supports any initiative that can have a positive impact on the possibility of achieving a two-State solution. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts by various parties to bring both sides closer to the negotiating table. Japan is continuing its own efforts to create an environment more conducive to peace negotiations on the basis of the three pillars of political dialogue, confidence-building and economic assistance. Our Foreign Minister Taro Kono, in his speech at the first Japan-Arab political dialogue this September, said that endurance, together with long-term foresight, is Japan's strength, and that we will



continue to move ahead step by step until we can reap the rewards. Our efforts in the region may seem a roundabout way to promote peace, but we believe they are important nonetheless.

One such example is the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP), the flagship project of our unique Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative, aimed at encouraging and supporting an independent Palestinian economy through regional cooperation between Israel, Jordan and Palestine. We expect the products produced at JAIP to be exported through this corridor into the region and beyond. We are pleased to report that this past year was one of progress for JAIP, with the number of companies in operation increasing from three to eight. We believe that a more sustainable Palestinian economy can make a two-State solution more viable. We would like to continue our cooperation with the project's partners and demonstrate what such cooperation in the region can achieve. Japan is currently working on upgrading this initiative. We plan to expand it into the information technology sector, making it a new pillar of the initiative. There are plenty of talented people in Palestine to whom Japan will offer its assistance so that they can fully exploit their potential.

This is not to say that economic development is an alternative to a future Palestinian State. Our goal is to generate trust, which complements other initiatives and leads to meaningful dialogue. Our hope is that this dialogue can lead, ultimately, to two States living side by side in peace and prosperity. We can hear voices yearning for peace from both Israelis and Palestinians. For 20 consecutive years, we have invited young future leaders of Israel and Palestine to Japan. This year, once again, the participants engaged in various activities together and exchanged views. One participant said that it was not impossible for both sides to understand each other and live in peace. Japan will continue its efforts in order to help such voices be heard.

**Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for many decades. Despite the international community's overwhelming support for a two-State solution, Palestine has yet to become an independent sovereign State and its people continue to suffer under foreign occupation. It is therefore time for the international community to make greater efforts to create conditions conducive to enabling the parties concerned to return to dialogue and negotiations in order to reach a lasting solution

to the protracted conflict and end the occupation of the Palestinian territory. Palestine's attainment of membership in the United Nations and the rights of its people as a recognized State do not obviate its firm commitment to resolving this conflict through peaceful means. We are well aware of the hopelessness of their suffering and struggle over the past several decades, when the international community has been unable to take decisive action at the level where it matters most.

We are deeply concerned about the continuing Israeli practice of settlement expansion in the face of the international community's growing concern. Such practices not only destroy Palestinians' property and homes and ruin economic development in the occupied areas, they also violate international humanitarian and human rights law and obstruct the peace process and opportunities for negotiations and a peaceful resolution. We encourage Israel to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2334 (2016), which stipulates that Israel should immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and fully respect all of its legal obligations in that regard. My delegation is also concerned about the plight of the Palestinian people who have suffered from the blockade, especially in the Gaza Strip, which has been imposed since 2007. It has brought them untold suffering that could lead to a humanitarian crisis if the situation continues unabated. We call on the occupying Power to lift the blockade as soon as possible and facilitate unimpeded humanitarian relief.

My delegation wants to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We strongly support the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Quartet road map, which envisages a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with Israel, within secured and internationally recognized borders. In that connection, the Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the international community in calling on Israel to immediately cease its unlawful occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, place a complete and indefinite freeze on all settlement activities and respond positively and in good faith to the international consensus view in order to chart a path conducive to the pursuit of peace, as well as to salvaging the prospects of achieving a two-State solution, as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine and wishes to reaffirm its consistent support to the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine as a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the role and the work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has always been there to assist millions of Palestinian people amid numerous difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble cause of finding a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh): On behalf of the Government and people of Bangladesh, I would like to reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the brotherly Government and people of the State of Palestine. Invoking our constitutional obligation, our Prime Minister has issued a statement on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/72/368) with its pertinent observations. We also appreciate the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/72/35), in which Bangladesh regularly participates as an observer. In keeping with its principled position, Bangladesh has sponsored the draft resolutions under agenda items 37 and 38.

As Bangladesh is currently overwhelmed by the massive and unprecedented influx of forcibly displaced people from Myanmar's Rakhine state, we cannot help being profoundly concerned about the protracted illegal occupation and humanitarian situation facing the Palestinian people. Bangladesh has been dealing with the Rohingya situation for the past three decades and is seeking a sustained and decisive initiative on the part of the international community to lend support to the bilateral diplomatic efforts we are pursuing with Myanmar. It is crucial to ensure that the States Members of the United Nations continue to pursue peaceful, just and lasting solutions to all the protracted crises that will otherwise continue to pose serious threats to international and regional peace and security.

The Secretary-General's report is indeed a disturbing read, which is unfortunately becoming the

norm rather than the exception. The continued breaches of international humanitarian law and systematic human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory have given rise to an egregious culture of impunity. In the absence of effective international accountability, the occupying Power continues to violate the rights of Palestinian citizens, imprisoning and abusing scores in its detention centres and dispossessing and displacing thousands of families through its construction and expansion of illegal settlements. We share the concerns about the reported lack of progress in implementing Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). It is obvious that the illegal Israeli settlements, as well as the wall in and around occupied East Jerusalem, are being deliberately pursued in order to fundamentally change the character, status and demography of the occupied Palestinian territories.

We want to reiterate that the Security Council has an obligation to prevail on Israel to immediately halt its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and put an end to all forms of occupation. Immediate priority must be given to ensuring international protection for the Palestinian people, who have suffered for decades from Israel's policies of collective punishment. The hunger strike recently observed by thousands of prisoners in Israeli detention centres underscores the need for the international community's sustained efforts to address their grievances and plight.

Bangladesh acknowledges the developments with regard to political unity and reconciliation in Palestine, which we consider a step in the right direction. As stated by our Prime Minister, the Government and the people of Bangladesh will remain steadfast in our support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Bangladesh looks forward to positive signs emerging from the various regional and bilateral initiatives being pursued to address the Palestinian question in the context of the two-State solution. We continue to urge all key actors to continue their efforts to pursue a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and the principle of land for peace.

We also join those pointing to the need for ensuring enhanced, predictable and sustainable funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it may effectively carry out its humanitarian mandate in support of Palestinian refugees.

**Mr. Munir** (Pakistan): Let me begin by commending the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its valuable work to further the cause of the Palestinian people. We also wish to thank the Committee for its comprehensive report (A/72/35).

The report of the Committee presents an eerily familiar and deeply disturbing pattern of systematic human rights violations that pervade all aspects of Palestinian life. Arbitrary administrative detentions, restrictions on movement, demolitions of homes and other measures of socioeconomic deprivation have become grim daily facts of life for Palestinian people.

This year serves as a particularly distressing milestone in the political history of Palestine. Today's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People marks the seventieth anniversary of resolution 181 (II) — the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. The resolution called for the creation of two States, and one was created within months. The other remains a dream even after 70 years. Earlier this month, we marked the centenary of the Balfour Declaration. It is also the fiftieth anniversary of the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, and a decade of the oppressive siege of Gaza. Must we continue to commemorate those dates, or do the Palestinians deserve better?

While the international community continues to reaffirm its abiding commitment to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people, nothing seems to have changed on the ground. The dark shadows of the Israeli occupation of Palestine have only lengthened with time, and Israel continues to defy morality, international law and global public opinion with impunity.

Last year, in a rare moment of international solidarity, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2334 (2016). It was an unequivocal signal to Israel that settlements in occupied Palestinian territory have no legal validity and remain a major stumbling block to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Yet, instead of ceasing its illegal settlements, Israel has in fact stepped up

settlement activity in the occupied territories. Nearly 10 per cent of the Israeli population now lives in those illegal settlements.

A viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, within the pre-1967 borders and with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is the only sustainable guarantee of enduring peace in the Middle East. There is no plan B for the region. We echo the Committee's call that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Palestinian issue is predicated on an end to illegal Israeli occupation, the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence, and the achievement of a two-State solution.

The role of the Security Council remains critical. For only through the full implementation of its resolutions on Palestine can the Council strengthen its own credibility and further the ideal of global peace and security.

The political reconciliation forged between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo last month offers fresh reason for hope and optimism. It not only restores political unity within the Palestinian ranks, but also provides renewed strength and vigour to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people. We congratulate our Palestinian brethren on that singular achievement and hope it will lead to real progress. For its part, the international community must help sustain that positive momentum.

Another dimension of the conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are, again, in blatant disregard of United Nations resolutions.

The international community cannot remain silent while Palestine continues to disappear before our very eyes. Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to the Palestine cause. Their valiant struggle for freedom and dignity must be crowned with success. There is no alternative.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the President for presiding over this important debate. I also thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian

Rights for their unwavering efforts in support of the Palestinian cause.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the words of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, in his message this morning to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (see A/AC.183/PV.386). In that letter, His Highness reaffirmed the ongoing and continuing support of the United Arab Emirates for the people of Palestine at all levels and in all forms. He also stated that his country would continue to promote their right to establish a Palestinian State on their land, along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Therefore, the United Arab Emirates condemns the continued and unjust Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and the subsequent aggressive policies against the fraternal Palestinian people. My country condemns Israel's continued violation of the sanctity of the holy sites, the destruction of Palestinian property, the confiscation of land, the oppression, detention and forced displacement of the Palestinian people and restrictions on access by Palestinians to workplaces and schools. Furthermore, Israel continues to build and expand settlements, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

Those illegal practices pose a major obstacle to every international effort to achieve a just and lasting peace, and they undermine a two-State solution. The Israeli occupation, which has been ongoing for decades, has also led to the deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and social conditions in the Palestinian territories. To address the suffering of the Palestinian people, the international community must provide assistance in education, health, food and infrastructure. That will enable the Palestinian Authority to address the challenges posed by the occupation and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Arab Emirates also hopes that the Palestinian reconciliation agreement recently reached in Cairo will contribute to the realization of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve an independent State. The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its support for that important milestone and appreciates

the invaluable role of the fraternal Arab Republic of Egypt in supporting Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

Regional and international efforts must also be reinforced to ensure that Israel complies with its legal and international obligations, repeals all its unilateral actions and ends its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. We reiterate that any just and lasting resolution to the Palestine question must be based on a two-State solution that conforms with the relevant international resolutions, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles.

In conclusion, we underscore that the international efforts to achieve peace in the region will not succeed without putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories, which are being exploited by terrorist groups to spread extremism and violence in the region.

**Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Fodé Seck, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and Permanent Representative of Senegal. We would also like to thank all the members of the Committee for their work on document A/72/35 and their unwavering efforts to support the Palestinian people in exercising their inalienable rights, to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In a letter on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Majesty Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa assured the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that the Kingdom of Bahrain supports the struggle of the Palestinian people in all international forums and fully supports the two-State solution. That support flows from our desire for a just and lasting peace in the region, which will eventually lead to prosperity for the peoples of the region.

Nevertheless, the negative impacts of the Israeli occupation, including violations, killings and illegal settlements, are a flagrant challenge to the international community and a violation of the United Nations resolutions, as they are totally indifferent to the plight and humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people. Therefore, Israel is threatening international peace and security, which is putting the Middle East under the pressure of instability, as any attempt to impose the status quo leads only to more tension and violence.



The Kingdom of Bahrain therefore supports all endeavours intended to find a lasting and just solution for the Palestinian cause, based on the two-State solution and the establishment of the independent State of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and based on United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That would eventually create opportunities for stability and development for all the peoples of the region. We welcome the announcement of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, as that is the main guarantee for achieving the goals of the Palestinian people. We commend the efforts of brotherly Egypt in that connection.

The Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people is one of the greatest obstacles to the resumption of peace negotiations, as shown by the ongoing arbitrary detentions and the blockade of Gaza for more than 10 years. There has been continuous expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories — especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which has been occupied for more than 50 years — in addition to the partition of Arab neighbourhoods and the desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

All of those policies and schemes are discriminatory and racist. They aim to change the demographic makeup of Jerusalem and obliterate its identity. It is also an attempt on the part of Israel to isolate the city from the Palestinian territories. For decades, that has been the day-to-day reality for the Palestinian people. That is why the Kingdom of Bahrain values the decisions made at last month's UNESCO meeting, which underscored the Islamic identity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, added the city of Hebron to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and affirmed the rights of Palestinians in all the holy places.

In conclusion, Bahrain calls on the international community to shoulder its responsibility by making every effort to secure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the relevant United Nations resolutions — including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 383 (1975), 1151 (1998) and 1397 (2002), regarding the two-State solution — so that all peoples in the region can enjoy stability and peace.

**Ms. Bahous** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General

Assembly. I also thank the Chair and the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts to attract international attention to the question of Palestine and support the rights of the Palestinian people.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Al-Nakba, and the Palestinian people continue to suffer from the long occupation with no prospects for progress. However, the current situation will not dissuade us from making every possible effort to end that Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on a final and just two-State solution in accordance with international rules and the Arab Peace Initiative. That is the fundamental and only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

His Highness Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein confirmed that reality in his letter to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. An Arab summit was held in Amman in March that resulted in a declaration that confirmed the Arab world's commitment to peace and a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, one based on the Arab Peace Initiative, as endorsed by the League Arab States and by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Arab Peace Initiative is the most comprehensive plan to achieve lasting peace, and it continues to await Israel's cooperation.

We have always stressed the need for Israel to end its occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories, its illegal settlement activities and its discriminatory practices against Palestinian people. The most important demand, however, is to respect international law, which Israel must also do. The Palestinian people did not write that law; it was established by this international Organization and its Member States. We all have the responsibility to respect the law with regard to all regional and international issues, with no exception.

The question of Palestine involves not only the Palestinian people: it is our collective cause. On this occasion, we must shoulder our responsibilities and obligations by sparing no effort to reach a political settlement that makes it possible for the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable and legal rights. For decades, Jordan has spared no effort to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. We will

continue to make every effort to establish conditions conducive to the resumption of serious negotiations aimed at achieving peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

A failure to achieve a just solution to the question of Palestine will have major regional and international implications and will lead to further extremism and violence. The international community must therefore accord priority attention to this issue so as to confer upon the Palestinian people its legitimate and internationally recognized rights. Jordan will support any international effort in that regard so as to achieve the two-State solution. We welcome the serious commitment by the American Administration to advance the peace process and relaunch genuine negotiations.

Jordan also welcomes the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, which should ensure national unity and support for the resumption of peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis. We stand ready to support all efforts by the Arab Republic of Egypt, and we commend its role in achieving Palestinian reconciliation. We also support the efforts of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist Palestinian refugees. We urge the international community, the Secretary-General and all parties to make every effort to provide urgent funding to UNRWA before the end of this year to enable the Agency to carry out its humanitarian work. Providing funding for humanitarian organizations, including UNRWA, is a collective responsibility for the international community as a whole.

Jordan stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people. As President of the current session of the Arab Summit and a country neighbouring Palestine, Jordan will continue its efforts to support and protect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We will continue to exercise our historical right to provide protection to the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, based on the Hashemite custodianship of His Majesty Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and on Jordan's proper right of custody.

**Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela takes the floor today on a date of great importance for the Palestinian cause, as it marks yet another anniversary of the adoption of resolution 181 (II), which established the plan to partition Palestine.

What appeared to be a good-faith effort to resolve the situation in Palestine under the British Mandate — a situation that originated in part in the desires and geopolitical calculations of the imperialist Powers — did not produce the result hoped for, namely, the establishment of two independent States, one Arab and the other Jewish. Instead, it gave rise to one of the greatest injustices in the history of humankind. The State of Israel was established, and today it enjoys the support and protection of hegemonic Powers. This new Israeli State has devoted itself to preventing the establishment of the State of Palestine through every means possible.

Furthermore, Israel became the occupying Power of the Palestinian territory, in one of the longest military occupations in modern time. It has carried out a policy of colonizing Palestinian territory, of discrimination, apartheid and oppression of the men, women and children of Palestine. All of that has been done to the indignation of those who value respect for international law and human rights and to the indifference of those Governments and organizations that, being able to act to avert that tragic situation, remain complicitly silent or shamelessly inert.

It is now 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, a show of arrogance in which a distant nation abrogated the right to decide over a territory not belonging to it so as to satisfy the needs and aspirations of one group at the expense of ignoring and betraying the legitimate aspirations of all the Palestinian people for their own State. It is 70 years since the Partition Plan, and almost 70 years after the Al-Nakba, or the catastrophe, the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their ancestral lands and the beginning of the terrible diaspora. It is 50 years of occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; and 10 years of the inhuman and brutal blockade of the Gaza Strip. We must point out, with great sorrow and powerlessness, that the human rights situation of the Palestinians has only worsened because of Israel's violent actions and destructive policies.

The occupying Power has brought generations of Palestinians pain, tragedy, misery and humiliation, and sadly, the reports before the General Assembly very accurately describe the recent actions taken by the Israeli Government against Palestine. Without doubt, the occupying Power intends to continue its criminal practices with impunity.

The policy of illegal Israeli settlements continues in the occupied territories, in complete disregard of the relevant United Nations resolutions, which call on the occupying Power to end that colonialist activity and the practice of confiscating land from its legitimate Palestinian owners, occupying land through legal or administrative sleight-of-hand, destroying homes, and expelling and displacing Palestinian populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as destroying infrastructure and the means of subsistence of the Palestinian people and building the wall of shame that produces additional forms of separation and discrimination directed against Palestinians.

Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) — in whose adoption Venezuela participated during our membership in the Council — marked a milestone in the work of the United Nations with regard to the expansion of Israel's illegal settlements. However, as long as that important decision is not accompanied by actions and measures leading to the occupying Power's compliance with it and the other relevant United Nations resolutions, its impact will be reduced to that of just one more document to be ignored by the Israeli Government. The Security Council must live up to its responsibilities for a solution to the Palestinian question, and the General Assembly must remain vigilant so that the collective voice of the peoples is heard, the peoples represented here, who adopt by overwhelming majorities resolutions that seek an end to the occupation and a solution to the terrible situation faced by the Palestinians oppressed by Israel.

The occupying Power's flagrant violations of the Palestinians' human rights and its abuses of and crimes against Palestinian men and women continue. Palestinians are subjected every day to attacks by the Israeli military and security forces, resulting in dozens of men, women and even minors being injured, wounded by live ammunition or killed through Israel's indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force. To that we can add the attacks and acts of humiliation carried out by Israeli extremist settlers — on several occasions with the consent or protection of the police or military forces of the occupying Power — against Palestinians who have done nothing but assert their rights over their land — a land that Israel lusts after — and face Israel's insolence and violence with dignity.

Moreover, pressure on, and harassment of, the Palestinian population continues, thereby hindering their free movement and access to education and health services. Arbitrary arrests by Israel also continue,

which have led to the unjust imprisonment of more than 6,000 Palestinians. In addition, 500 Palestinians are subject to administrative detention, and 331 Palestinian children are in prison because of the irrationality of the occupying Power.

Venezuela demands that Israel put an end to those repeated violations of international law, international humanitarian law, the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Israel's brutal attempts to crush the brave spirit of the Palestinians with violence and State terrorism are doomed to fail, but the international community must be firm in its condemnation and demand an immediate cessation of such practices.

The situation in the Gaza Strip — inhumanely blocked by Israel — constitutes a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian inhabitants, reminding us of reprehensible actions that we thought had been overcome in history. Almost 2 million people live under a fierce siege and suffer unjust restrictions on the entry and exit of persons and goods to and from the Gaza Strip, which negatively affects the efforts of the Palestinians and the international community to rebuild houses, hospitals, schools, crops, jobs and livelihoods and services in the area.

The grave humanitarian situation suffered by the Palestinians in a blockaded Gaza means that 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line and that more than 900,000 people depend upon humanitarian aid to survive. The illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip must be lifted as soon as possible. The security reasons that could be argued should under no circumstances be used to justify hundreds of thousands of Palestinians suffering an infamous siege that threatens the possibilities of economic growth and development of the area and that deserves the unanimous condemnation of all nations.

We also condemn the occupation of the Syrian Golan and the discriminatory and abusive practices against the Syrian people who are living under the unjustified occupation by Israel. We equally condemn the expansion of illegal settlements and the appropriation of land. The withdrawal from the Syrian Golan is an imperative that the Israeli Government must comply with immediately.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the international community must take action. We cannot continue to be passive witnesses

to the appalling acts of the Israeli occupying Power against the Palestinians. Such acts are, in many cases, tantamount to war crimes. It is enough to witness how Israel benefits from the protection of powerful allies to implement, with impunity, their plans to end the two-State solution and make a Palestinian State unviable, while also closing off political and peaceful avenues towards a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question and an end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The efforts of the United Nations and its specialized bodies — such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, among others — are useful and necessary, and we reiterate our gratitude and support for such efforts. However, without concrete steps and significant advances towards solving the Palestinian question, all of those efforts will simply be palliatives that will not impede the occupying Power in its aim to destroy Palestine and end the possibilities of a viable Palestinian State, in clear violation of its obligations under international law.

The only way to achieve peace and reaffirm the right of the Palestinians to be a sovereign and independent nation is the two-State solution. There is no admissible proposal other than the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinians to their own free and sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and within pre-1967 borders; a Palestinian nation that lives in peace with the State of Israel within recognized and safe borders and that is a full Member of the United Nations.

The United Nations and its Member States are morally obliged to honour the trust placed in the Organization by Palestinian men and women and their political leadership, so that definitive steps can be taken without delay towards concrete political processes that reactivate the peace process, always as part of the two-State solution and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We must not give up. Let us not give in to the barbarity of the occupying Power and the insolence of those who protect it. Let us not contribute further to the resounding failure that the so-called Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been to date. Let us demonstrate our solidarity with the Palestinians here and now. Present and future generations in Palestine and in our countries count on us to honour the ethical commitment that

enables the Organization to work for security, human rights, development and peace of all the peoples of the world.

**Mr. Lal (India):** I thank the President for convening today's important discussion on the question of Palestine as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This has been a long struggle, and our support to the cause remains steadfast.

The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, in his message on this important occasion, reaffirmed India's long-standing support for the Palestinian cause, while expressing hope for an early realization of a sovereign, independent, united and viable Palestine that peacefully coexists with Israel. India is proud to partner with Palestine in its development and nation-building efforts. Prime Minister Modi's message also refers to the significant upscaling of Indian contributions to the human resource development of Palestine.

Earlier this year, we had the honour of welcoming President Mahmoud Abbas on his third State visit to India. Our ongoing high-level engagement has included visits by our Minister for External Affairs, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, and Minister of State M.J. Akbar last year, as well as a visit by the President of India to Palestine during 2015. Those high-level exchanges provided further impetus to the India-Palestine development partnership. During the visit of President Abbas to India this year, agreements on promoting cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health care, information technology, youth affairs and media agencies were among those concluded.

We are currently working together on several large development projects. Those have included a Palestine-India techno park and a Palestine institute of diplomacy, both in Ramallah, as well as an India-Palestine centre of excellence in information technology in Gaza. We are confident that those multimillion dollar projects will contribute to long-term development and capacity-building.

India is also happy to collaborate with fellow developing countries Brazil and South Africa in the framework of the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) arrangement by supporting other development projects in Palestine through the IBSA Fund. That Fund is implemented in association with the Office for South-South Cooperation here at the United Nations and represents a unique form of South-South solidarity and cooperation. Five such projects have now been



completed, and three are slated for inauguration next month. Two of those projects — the Al-Quds Hospital and the Atta Habib Medical Centre — are located in Gaza.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to do commendable work in serving Palestinian refugees. As part of our ongoing commitment to support Palestinian refugees, India has also enhanced its annual core contribution to UNRWA to \$1.25 million since last year.

I would like to conclude by extending our warm wishes to our Palestinian friends in their pursuit of peace and prosperity.

**Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Turkey): On the occasion of the Day of International Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to start by saluting the noble struggle of the Palestinians against 50 years of occupation and oppression. The occupation has imposed a heavy burden on the Palestinian people, who remain deprived of their right to a decent life, dignity and freedom. A negotiated settlement that leads to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital remains the only way to lay the foundation for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. That is also the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — the only way to ensure security for both sides. There is no alternative route.

For any peace initiative to succeed, the parameters established by the resolutions of the United Nations must be upheld. Israel's practices in contravention of international law, particularly the systematic expansion of settlements, erode the viability of a two-State solution. Provocative steps aimed at the status and sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif are not helpful for the possibility of a peaceful coexistence. All those actions combined breed desperation, alienate and radicalize people and fuel extremism in the region.

Amid a challenging period, the developments towards national reconciliation and unity among the Palestinians gives us hope. We wholeheartedly welcomed the reconciliation agreement signed by our Palestinian brothers and sisters on 12 October. That significant step will enable them to express their legitimate demands with one voice, and we will continue to support them in that process.

Palestine is doing its part for lasting peace. Israel is also expected to show political will towards the same end. The international community must respond to that resolute step by Palestine. The recognition of the State of Palestine by more countries and its full integration in international institutions is vital in this critical period. In that regard, we welcome the recent membership of the State of Palestine in INTERPOL.

The Palestinian people deserve strong support for the two-State vision and genuine efforts to end the protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In that regard, the strengthening of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East remains a primary goal. We need to recognize and commend the vital role of the Agency as a stabilizing factor in a volatile region. Pending the achievement of a just solution, it is the responsibility of all Member States to consolidate their political and financial assistance to the Agency's mandate. Turkey will continue to address the plight of the Palestine refugees. We will also sustain our efforts to empower the Palestinian people and improve their living conditions through development and humanitarian assistance.

On the fiftieth year of occupation, we all agree on the need to revitalize the peace process. We see this as essential to grant a life with dignity to the Palestinian people and ensure stability in the region. In that regard, it is high time for the international community to uphold its responsibility and renew its engagement to reach a negotiated political settlement based on the two-State solution in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey will not cease its efforts to that end.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Over the past 70 years, the international community has agreed that the perfect, fair solution for the Palestinian cause is the establishment of two States along the borders of 4 June 1967. However, today we see that the chances for such a solution are diminishing on the ground, due to the ongoing and increasing Israeli settlement activities in 2017, including in Jerusalem, Hebron and even some vital areas in Area C.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the challenges of the diminishing possibility of the two-State solution and the frustration of the Palestinian people — especially 23 years after having signed the Oslo Accords, whereby the Palestinian State was supposed to be established within five years — Egypt managed recently to resume

the efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation, which culminated in Cairo on 12 October in the signing of an agreement to put an end to the Palestinian division. The international community welcomed that agreement, which makes it possible for the legitimate Palestinian Government to assume its role in Gaza for the first time since 2007. The agreement is a recognition of Palestinian unity, both in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, under one unified leadership that recognizes the State of Israel and insists on negotiations and a peaceful path towards a two-State solution.

While we are making efforts with our Palestinian brothers to seize the opportunity to reunify the territories under the legitimate leadership, I would also like to call upon the international community, especially those Powers with influence, to also seize this historic opportunity and salvage the two-State solution. That solution will come about only through a comprehensive, lasting political agreement. I also urge them to realize the seriousness and consequences of the debacle of a temporary solution for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and for the whole region, not to mention the whole world.

Given the call for peace and coexistence addressed by the Egyptian President before the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.5), we urge the Palestinians and Israelis to recognize that in the Holy Land, both peoples are there to stay. Neither of them will vanish, and therefore it is their own choice either to coexist on the basis of equality in rights and obligations, or to surrender to the extreme opinions that might serve some. That option, however, would impose very grave consequences on both peoples for a long time, owing to the rejection of the rational solution.

Settlement is not impossible. United Nations resolutions, especially of the Security Council, have already decided the provisions of a settlement based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations. If we read those decisions and resolutions thoroughly, as well as the Arab Peace Initiative — a critical, historic milestone supported by the Security Council in resolution 2334 (2016) — we realize that all issues and causes can be solved and helped. The United Nations resolutions did not dictate any solutions to anybody, but drew out a context and framework to finally settle

the issue by way of direct negotiations between both parties. Those resolutions were also very flexible.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our determination to continue working with both parties, the Palestinians and Israelis, as well as with influential international Powers, in order to be able to reach a just settlement that realizes the aspirations of the Palestinian people by establishing their State along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

### **Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** Before concluding, I would like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September, the General Assembly decided that the seventy-second session would recess on Monday, 11 December. However, in view of the work that remains to be completed for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess to Friday, 22 December.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to postpone the date of recess to Friday, 22 December?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** I should also like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Fifth Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September, the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the General Committee that the Fifth Committee would complete its work by Friday, 8 December. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Fifth Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work to Friday, 22 December, in view that such an extension would facilitate reaching consensus on the pending draft resolutions before it.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Fifth Committee until Friday, 22 December?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*