



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

52nd plenary meeting

Tuesday, 1 December 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Second report of the General Committee (A/64/250/Add.1)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In paragraph 1 (a) of its report (A/64/250/Add.1), the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled “Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean in the General Assembly” be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, “Organizational, administrative and other matters”.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In paragraph 1 (b), the General Committee further recommends that the item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform members that the item entitled “Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

in the General Assembly” becomes item 169 on the agenda of the current session.

The Chairman of the Sixth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

In paragraph 3 (a) of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled “United Nations University” be included in the agenda of the current session under heading B, “Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences”.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading B?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In paragraph 3 (b), the General Committee further recommends that the item be allocated to the Second Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Second Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform members that the item entitled “United Nations University” becomes item 170 on the agenda of the current session.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



The Chairman of the Second Committee will be informed of the decision just taken by the General Assembly.

In paragraph 4 (a) of the report, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled "Observer status in the General Assembly for the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly" be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In paragraph 4 (b), the General Committee further recommends that the item be allocated to the Sixth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate this item to the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Observer status in the General Assembly for the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly" becomes item 171 on the agenda of the current session.

In light of the decisions just taken by the Assembly, may I take it that the Assembly also decides to extend the work of the Sixth Committee to specifically consider agenda items 169 and 171, which have been allocated to that Committee?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Chairman of the Sixth Committee will be informed of the decisions just taken by the General Assembly.

In paragraph 5, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte" be included in the agenda of the current session under heading A, "Maintenance of international peace and security", on the understanding that there would be no consideration of this item by the General Assembly until further notice.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading A, on the understanding that there would

be no consideration of this item by the General Assembly until further notice?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform members that the item entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte" becomes item 172 on the agenda of the current session.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the second report of the General Committee.

Agenda item 16 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/64/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/351)

Draft resolutions (A/64/L.20, A/64/L.21, A/64/L.22 and A/64/L.23)

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Yesterday, a great voice for the Palestinian people, Mr. Walid Khalidi, spoke at the United Nations. His lament reminded me of that other great Palestinian, Edward Saïd, and hearing Khalidi I thought it appropriate to remember Saïd and to give thanks to God that his voice continues.

A lot of people might be unhappy that the voice of Palestine as echoed by these great people is still being heard in the halls of the United Nations, and today that lament carries forward in items 15 and 16 as a stark reminder of the protracted suffering, desolation and dispossession of the Palestinian people and their continuing ordeal and oppression under occupation. A lot of people seem to ask: "What good does this annual lament make"? To them I say, "If you listen closely enough, the lament is asking not for retribution but for lasting peace". That is the essential matter in this lament.

And is it a difficult task for the people who believe in one God? Palestinians and Jews believe in Abraham; both believe in Moses. Is it all that difficult to reach the promised land together and to unite? I do not think so. I think that today we must commend the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the very compact case and position they have put before us here. I would

specifically like to mention the Permanent Representative of Senegal and the Rapporteur of the Committee, the Permanent Representative of Malta, for their invaluable contributions.

Today's important debate coincides with the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is therefore a propitious occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and to remind the world of their inalienable rights.

For the past six decades, the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine has remained one of the major challenges for the international community. Let us put on record that we are now entering the seventh decade of our collective failure — I repeat, our collective failure — to meet this challenge. It is indeed a sad record for the United Nations. From Oslo in 1993 to Annapolis in 2007, matters do not seem to have become more encouraging. On the other hand, the serious deterioration of living conditions in the occupied territories has seen no reversal. The impunity and defiance of the international community are inflicting a mortal blow both to the proponents of the peace process and, more important, to the living conditions of human beings under forceful occupation.

From among these trends, the worsening humanitarian situation in the occupied territories is a matter of more serious concern to my delegation. As acknowledged in various United Nations reports, the closure of Gaza's borders to the free flow of people and commerce is strangulating the local economy. Public services and human security stand threatened. Construction of the separation wall replicates the situation in the West Bank.

Elsewhere in the occupied territories, settlement activity by Israel is compounding the conflict. We note with great concern a finding that, even this year, over 755 square metres of further territory — and this may sound miniscule, but it is the principle of it that matters — has been added to the settlements in the West Bank alone. This becomes, slowly and steadily, an encroachment that does not want to go away. The settlement activity in and around East Jerusalem and the inexplicable and irrational occupation of the Syrian Golan, together with provocative excavation around sites holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews, are only widening the dimensions of this conflict. The construction of 900 housing units in Gilo, south of East

Jerusalem, has the potential to further ignite the prevailing tensions in the region.

The incessant culture of impunity vitiates trust and confidence, which are prerequisite to any viable peace process. Confidence cannot be built in the face of actions involving the use of force, human rights violations, discrimination, checkpoints, permits and blockades of entire populations, resulting in social and economic strangulation. The collective punishment of the Palestinian people is the worst example of all. Israel must seriously reconsider its actions and harsh measures, not just for the sake of the besieged Palestinian people and the peace process, but also for its own security concerns and the peace of the world that it antagonizes with utter disdain for humanity.

While we see little reason for optimism for a sustainable peace process in the near future, complete desperation and hopelessness must be avoided because they create violence. It is our hope that the parties concerned will undertake immediate and credible confidence-building measures aimed at improving the overall environment and making it conducive to a negotiation process. For this, it is imperative for the international community to re-engage on this issue and to revive the momentum for a renewed peace process.

During the Security Council debate of 14 October, I outlined four parameters for such a re-engagement (see S/PV.6201). I shall now repeat them. First, the Security Council should take a lead in the international community's re-engagement. Its member States must show the political will to achieve real progress on peace and security in the Middle East based on relevant resolutions of the Security Council as well as the Madrid terms of reference, the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the understanding reached in Annapolis in 2007.

Secondly, the Middle East Quartet must utilize the full potential of its statement of 24 September 2009 in support of the peace process through a transparent and objective engagement.

Thirdly, there is a pressing urgency to address the humanitarian plight in the Palestinian territories and to rebuild the Palestinian institutions battered by conflict and violence. Likewise, we must support the efforts to achieve further cohesion among the Palestinian people.

Fourthly, to achieve a lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is imperative to address its root

cause — the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. The solution therefore requires Israel's complete withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon. Israel should also immediately cease all settlement activities. Also crucial to this equation would be parallel progress on the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel tracks in order to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East — peace being the most important aspect of the rendition of this speech today.

Having said that, let us make life a little easier. Coming in, I met a very wise, old Arab dignitary, and I said to him, "Why do we not take one point and begin from there?" And he turned around and said, "There is a very easy solution. Let us just freeze the settlements immediately and opt for peace". This is a very simplistic but very profound piece of advice. Let Israel grasp the bull by its horns. Let it not falter at this moment. This is the time to grasp what should be a tenable peace.

The people of all races and religions in the Middle East have suffered for too long. Over the past 60 years, many generations have completed their respective life cycles in the perverse shadows of poverty, inane violence and life-threatening insecurity. Only our firm, joint resolve, concerted action and, above all, the political will to build a lasting peace can save succeeding generations of the region from the tragedies and tribulations of their ill-fated heritage and from the repetition of the senseless, blood-soaked history of their predecessors.

I should like to conclude by quoting John Milton. In the face of perversity and the fall from paradise, he writes in the first book of *Paradise Lost* that "All is not lost; the unconquerable Will". That is what the United Nations needs: an unconquerable will.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation should like to extend its thanks to Ambassador Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We should also like to thank all the other members of the Committee for their efforts in preparing the Committee's thirty-fifth report (A/64/35) before us, which contains valuable information on the grave deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We also highly appreciate their

efforts in carrying out their tasks aimed at enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights as enshrined in the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, which have echoed in this Hall a thousand times.

We should also like to thank the Department of Public Information for its effective role in highlighting issues relevant to the question of Palestine and for organizing activities within its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine in order to raise awareness of this issue among the international community.

Yesterday, in a letter addressed by King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Paul Badji, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Majesty called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities with respect to the future of the Palestinian people and to help them attain their inalienable rights to self-determination and establish their independent State on their national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

His Majesty also called upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority to pursue peaceful efforts to reach a just and comprehensive peace agreement, in accordance with the Annapolis Joint Understanding and proceedings within the international framework on this issue, foremost among which are United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

He also stressed the need for the international community to take a firm position in genuine solidarity with the Palestinian people and to help them realize their legitimate national rights by offering them political and financial support for pursuing serious negotiations aimed at reaching a final settlement of this pending issue.

He also stressed that, this year, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes at a time when the Palestinian people are suffering most. The greatest testimony to this was the report prepared by Judge Richard Goldstone this year (A/HCR/12/48), which laid bare to the international community the persecution and oppression of the Palestinian people at the hands of the occupying Israeli forces. It reaffirmed the absolute necessity for the international community

to provide international protection to the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

That letter also stresses Bahrain's firm position with regard to the Palestinian issue in two particular aspects: first, in standing with the brotherly Palestinian people against that historic injustice, embodied in the worst forms of occupation, wanton aggression, forced emigration, killing and blockade; and secondly, in reaching a peaceful international settlement of the issue, based on the well-known international terms of reference.

I need not dwell on the daily deterioration of the situation of the occupied Palestinian people due to Israel's ongoing policies of subjecting them to humiliation and siege, in particular in the Gaza Strip, and of continuing to build the separation wall in clear violation of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, international law and international humanitarian law. The latest events in Gaza are only one more atrocious link in a chain of aggression perpetrated by Israel, in which it has deliberately destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and United Nations facilities, killed men, women and the elderly, used internationally prohibited weapons, and deprived Palestinians of the most basic necessities of life under the eyes of the international community.

Only a political process can bring about a peaceful settlement that guarantees the Palestinian people the enjoyment of all its inalienable rights. It would also ensure that the Israeli people enjoy peace and security within internationally recognized borders, living side by side with their neighbour in peace. That is Bahrain's particular appeal at this time and always has been.

In conclusion, we agree with the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/351) that the time has come for Israel to fundamentally change its policies in that regard. The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People represents recognition of the international community's particular responsibility to remediate the historic injustice and inequity done to the Palestinian people. It also requires us to assist that people in attaining their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and to establish their independent State on their national soil, with Jerusalem as the capital.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to express our solidarity with the people of Palestine in their tireless efforts and unwavering determination to pursue their national aspirations and in their courageous struggle to defend and exercise their inalienable rights.

The recent United Nations reports on the question of Palestine, particularly the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, contained in document A/64/35, once again bear witness to the unfortunate reality that, in the period under consideration, the Israeli regime has continued with its crimes against the defenceless Palestinian people. It has been systematically altering the demography and the historical and cultural heritage of the Palestinian land through unlawful policies and practices, thus inflicting unspeakable suffering and losses on the Palestinian people, including the recent carnage in Gaza that resulted in the deaths and injury of hundreds of innocent Palestinians and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in that area.

Despite the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion and the strong condemnation of the international community, illegal settlements are expanding much faster than before and more and more Palestinian houses are being demolished. The recent illegal decision of the Israeli regime to build 900 new housing units is a move undoubtedly orchestrated to alter the demographic composition and character of the Palestinian territories, particularly in Jerusalem and its surrounding areas.

The Israeli regime has also persisted in its aggressive and expansionist policies towards Lebanon and the occupied Syrian Golan. The illegitimate regime continues to violate the most basic principles of international law, international humanitarian and human rights law and the United Nations Charter, and continues its defiance of numerous resolutions of different United Nations bodies. Those crimes are undoubtedly among the most serious and gross violations of United Nations resolutions, especially those of the Security Council, and therefore must be dealt with urgently and appropriately by the Council and other United Nations bodies in a resolute and decisive manner.

In that regard, we welcome the adoption of resolution 64/10 on 5 November on the follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. That resolution needs to be seriously followed up by the relevant United Nations organs, in particular the Security Council, in order to bring to justice the Israeli perpetrators of the crimes so vividly authenticated in the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48) and to put an end to the culture of impunity and above-the-law behaviour. If criminals are punished, room for criminal acts by those who possess the motives and means to commit them will be restricted. Impunity for the perpetrators of serious crimes is itself a cause of and an incentive to further crimes.

Unfortunately, the Security Council's debate on the Goldstone report in October (see S/PV.6201) did not result in the expected conclusion. We believe that any action to appease the Israeli regime or to divert the attention of the international community from the root causes of the issue of Palestine, including the politically motivated manoeuvres in the Council during its debate on Gaza, amounts to defending State terrorism, injustice and oppression, as well as the recent 22-day massacre of hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children.

Since the question of Palestine is the international community's most urgent problem, finding a solution to that issue is of the highest priority. Over 60 years have passed since the occupation of Palestine. During all those years, the Israeli regime has benefited from all material means of power, including financial aid, weapons and technology, as well as the political and diplomatic support of some Western countries, including their giant monopolized empire of news media and networks. Yet, despite that staggering support, not only have those countries failed to solve the problem of the Israeli regime's illegitimacy, but the complex issue of Palestine has grown more complicated with time. In the past, there have been many solutions on the table, but none has been successful because, first, they were based on denying, in one way or another, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and, secondly, because of the intransigence of the Israeli regime in failing to abide by its commitments and international norms and regulations.

There is no doubt that attaining a peaceful and just settlement of the question of Palestine is

imperative to the realization of a comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. Aggression, State terrorism, intimidation, occupation, the setting up of new illegal settlements and the construction of the separation wall will not bring peace to the Middle East. In our view, a lasting peace in Palestine and the region will be possible only by establishing justice and putting an end to discrimination and the occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

Today, in commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we need to act collectively to demonstrate our unqualified support for the Palestinian cause, and to rally to assist those who have been deprived of their inalienable rights. The reconstruction of Gaza is one of Palestine's most urgent needs, requiring our strong political will and immediate collective action. We have a common duty and responsibility to offer multifaceted support to the Palestinians in Gaza. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has done its share to financially assist the Palestinians in order to alleviate their suffering in the humanitarian sphere.

My delegation would like to reiterate our proposal for a durable solution to the Palestinian problem. Our proposal is a solution that is in total sympathy with democratic values and has a basis in common logic. Based on our proposal, all those who have a legitimate stake in the territory of Palestine, including Muslims, Christians and Jews, should choose their own system of Government in a general referendum. All Palestinians who have for years endured the ordeals of exile should also be allowed to take part in the referendum. For true believers in peace and democracy, this is the only just, comprehensive and democratic solution to this long-lasting problem in the Middle East.

Finally, I wish to express our appreciation to the Chairman and the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their tireless efforts to address the torment and onerous situation of the people of Palestine and for the informative report they have presented to us.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): I wish to express the sincere appreciation of my delegation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report contained in document A/64/35. We would also like to thank the Chairman of

the Committee, Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal, for his comprehensive statement on the Committee's work.

Sri Lanka has consistently extended its steadfast support to the Palestinian people in the pursuit of their inalienable rights, including the right to statehood. This has been a matter persistently advocated by our President, His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, over the past 40 years. I would like to seek the Assembly's indulgence and quote the message he has sent to mark this year's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which reads as follows.

"On the solemn occasion marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, on behalf of the people and the Government of Sri Lanka, I take this opportunity to reiterate our unequivocal and sincere support for the people and the Government of Palestine for their just struggle to achieve their inalienable rights, including the right to statehood.

"We remain deeply concerned about the widespread suffering and hardships the Palestinian people continue to undergo and the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We welcome the new efforts and commitments by the international community to reinvigorate the peace process. However, we are disappointed that no tangible results have been achieved towards the two-State solution and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

"On this commemorative Day of Solidarity, I wish to recall my association with the cause of the Palestinian people for nearly 40 years, during which I have advocated the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and a viable solution to the conflict. I sincerely hope that all peace initiatives that have as their main objective the realization of a two-State solution and the renewed efforts of the international community will enable the speedy creation of a Palestinian State coexisting with Israel in peace, harmony and prosperity."

The Palestinian people have suffered for too long and have lived under occupation. The denial of their fundamental right to statehood due to the continued Israeli occupation has seriously affected the

socio-economic well-being of the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We believe it is imperative to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, and those adopted by the Assembly, to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Middle East and Palestinian questions. The principle of land for peace, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative are important milestones in the process of achieving a permanent two-State solution.

For peace to be viable and sustainable in the Palestinian territory, Israel must withdraw from all the Palestinian territories back to the 1967 borders. It must end the economic blockade and siege of the Gaza Strip. The illegal expansion of settlements and the continuation of the construction of the separation wall, changing the demographic and geographic character of the Palestinian territory, can only increase tensions and animosities between the two parties to the conflict. The Palestinian Authority needs to continue implementing its security plan and to make every effort at its disposal to improve law and order.

Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its support for the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. We stress the need to preserve and protect the national and democratic institutions that are vital to a future independent Palestinian State. We therefore urge the Palestinian groups to act speedily to reconcile and unite within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority. Unity among Palestinian people is their strength. In this regard, we commend the initiative of Egypt to promote a dialogue among the parties concerned in order to restore Palestinian national unity.

Serious efforts must be made for the early resumption of negotiations by the two sides, with the objective of reaching a final agreement, to enable both the people of Israel and the people of Palestine to live side by side, securely and within recognized boundaries. In this regard, it is important that both parties abide by their previous agreements and obligations and take concrete steps to consolidate confidence.

In conclusion, permit me to convey our appreciation to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which has played a vital role in providing essential humanitarian relief and development

assistance to the Palestinian population for 60 years. The work carried out by UNRWA under difficult conditions is commendable. We also extend our good wishes to the outgoing Commissioner-General, Ms. Karen AbuZayd, who has contributed tirelessly to this worthy cause during her tenure.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): “Thirty-three for. Thirteen against. Ten abstentions. The resolution is approved.” Those were the words at Lake Success on 29 November 1947 that announced the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 181 (II). Those were the words that conferred international legitimacy on the creation of two States for two peoples: “Thirty-three for. Thirteen against. Ten abstentions. The resolution is approved.”

The Jewish population in then-British-Mandate Palestine accepted that historic resolution. It reflected the Zionist conviction that it was both necessary and possible to live in peace with our neighbours in the land of our forefathers. Yet the Arab side within the Mandate territory and across the region instantly rejected resolution 181 (II), and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon — Members of the United Nations — launched a war of annihilation against Israel together with Jordan and the Arabs of Palestine.

As a result of that rejection and that war, many Palestinian Arabs became refugees, while a similar number of Jews who lived in Arab countries were forced to flee their homes, and they, too, became refugees. They all — Jews and Arabs — lived in refugee camps, torn away from their homes.

The difference between the two distinct refugee populations was — and still is — that Israel has done its utmost to redeem these Jewish refugees from their misery and to absorb them successfully in Israel, whereas the belligerent Arab States did not lift a finger to redeem their brethren. To wage war? Yes, by all means. To help in redeeming and resettling, let alone absorbing their brethren: that is another matter altogether.

Today, the Arabs’ historic mistake of rejecting resolution 181 (II) is also measured in lives lost in war, parents who bury their children and pain that has touched us all, Israelis and Arabs. But Israel will not let the pain that we all have suffered turn into hate. It will not diminish Israel’s desire for peace. For history shows that peace can be achieved in the Middle East, such as through the historic peace treaties with Egypt

and Jordan. How can it be, then, that the debate in these halls embraces a one-sided narrative that promotes and maintains an obsessive and condemnatory focus on Israel?

Today’s debate undermines the endorsement of the two-State solution. It reflects the reality of an automatic majority that ensures that any debate on the situation in the Middle East will be fruitless, destructive, cynical and hateful. Peace will require a new direction. It will require truthfulness and courage.

And so I ask our Palestinian neighbours whether or not we both possess the courage to transform ourselves from soldiers of war into soldiers of peace. Do the Arab States have the courage not only to speak about peace, but to engage with Israel in a serious political and economic manner? Do those in our region have the courage to say publicly that Israel is the legitimate nation-State of the Jewish people? Do the members of this body have the courage to confront Hamas and Hizbullah and all those for whom there is no two-State solution?

Israel, for its part, will choose the path of peace over the course of conflict. Thus, a few days ago, the Government of Israel announced a policy of settlement restraint, a policy that includes the suspension of new permits and new construction in the West Bank for a period of 10 months. This unprecedented step reflects three simple realities: first, that Israel wants to reenter into negotiations with the Palestinians; secondly, that Israel is not only talking about peace but is taking painful and effective steps towards it; and, thirdly, that Israel is serious about its intention to pursue peace.

Israel wishes to reach a historic peace agreement, and will discuss peace at any time, anywhere and without preconditions. We wish to hear the Palestinian Authority say the same: that it, too, will discuss peace at any time, anywhere and without preconditions. Only through negotiations between the parties can we solve the conflict in a complete and comprehensive fashion.

We are now witnessing efforts to use the Security Council or the General Assembly to promote unilateral declarations. Like the rejection of resolution 181 (II), this could turn into another historic mistake. Such declarations erode the foundations of peace and create instead a situation that will destroy the hope for bilateral negotiations.

We must also confront the most dangerous threat to peace in our region, namely Iran. Iran continues to export violence, hatred and terrorism to our region and beyond. The 360 tons of weapons aboard the *Francop* were merely a drop in the ocean. Iran funds, trains and supports global terrorism, including the relentless attacks by Hamas and Hizbullah against Israeli men, women and children. Iran must be stopped.

As our region stands at a critical juncture, this body can choose between two paths. It can indulge in the hatred of yesterday. It can mourn the rejection of resolution 181 (II). It can even promote and applaud futile unilateral affirmations. It can turn a blind eye to terrorists and their sponsors and justify their repugnant tactics and deadly consequences. Or it can recognize that the only way towards peace is through bilateral negotiations. It can then celebrate 29 November as a joint day of peace for two States, living honourably, side by side. For us, there is no other way.

Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri (India): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to express our appreciation to you for having convened this discussion on the question of Palestine in the General Assembly as we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Our appreciation goes also to Ambassador Paul Badji and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

India has long-standing social and cultural ties with the entire region of the Middle East and a strong tradition of support for the Palestinian cause. We voted in support of the Human Rights Council resolution on the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, as well as General Assembly resolution 64/10. We believe that the conflict in West Asia is essentially political and cannot be resolved by force. We favour a negotiated solution wherein a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine can live within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet Road Map and Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). This is in line with our support for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as well. India also participated in the Annapolis Conference in 2007.

The Arab Peace Initiative calls for the withdrawal of Israel to pre-1967 borders, the recognition of Israel and the establishment of the State of Palestine with

East Jerusalem as its capital. India has supported that plan. We have also called for an end to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and the easing of restrictions, at an early date, of the movement of goods and persons within Palestine.

India has always stood by the Palestinian people in their pursuit of their legitimate goals and their efforts aimed at economic and social development with dignity and self-reliance. Towards that end, India has been doing what it can to extend development support to Palestine. In New Delhi, we have completed the Palestinian Chancery building as a gift from the Government of India and an enduring symbol of our solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Mindful of the deteriorating humanitarian situation, India contributed \$1 million in response to the flash appeals of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) following the conflict in Gaza in late 2008-early 2009.

In this sixtieth anniversary year of the establishment of UNRWA, we have increased our contributions to that agency. India has, furthermore, contributed \$10 million in budget support to the Palestinian National Authority after the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2009.

We have also participated in various donor conferences, including those in Paris, Jakarta and Sharm el-Sheikh, and have expeditiously implemented our pledges.

Instability and violence, coupled with humanitarian issues in Palestine, have impacted upon the broader situation in the Middle East and beyond. There can be little doubt that the situation in Palestine remains a matter of grave concern to the international community, and there is a need for all stakeholders to come together and create an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue in the Middle East peace process.

The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh, in his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, reiterated that concerted and inclusive action is necessary to reinvigorate the peace process with the objective of achieving a durable, comprehensive and

just settlement. We remain convinced that lasting peace in the region will contribute to global stability and prosperity.

Mr. Chekkori (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): We met yesterday to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which serves to remind us that compliance with United Nations resolutions on the Palestinian question is necessary so that the Palestinians can enjoy their right to self-determination and their own State.

The Palestinian people are resilient despite the challenges they face, but they have suffered now for more than six decades. They continue to be courageous in asking here and in other international forums for the respect of commitments and promises made so many times over that we have come to regard the rays of hope they provided as mere mirages.

We would like to pay tribute to the steadfast Palestinian people who have undergone trials and, in spite of all those years of difficulties and all those years of displacement, imprisonment, killing and an overwhelming daily situation, have maintained that ray of hope. And every time someone would want to snuff it out, soft winds fan its flames for a better day tomorrow so that the Palestinians can live in their own territory and in peace and security.

We fully align ourselves with the statements made by Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Syria on behalf of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. We would like to stress, notwithstanding, the following main points.

Before doing that, however, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to consider recent developments on the question of Palestine.

We would also like to express our appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Paul Badji for the efforts he has made at the head of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I also wish to commend the work and efforts made by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, as well as the special programme in the Department of Public Information. We are grateful for its many activities, in particular its daily update of developments in the situation.

Last September, we celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Works and Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Here, we wish to commend and express our gratitude to the continuous and valuable efforts that have been made by UNRWA to reduce the suffering of more than 4.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories and in the surrounding countries.

As she leaves her post, we commend Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd on all the work she has done for the past nine years while at the head of UNRWA and all of the valuable achievements of her work on behalf of the Palestinian people.

We are meeting here to discuss the question of Palestine in the present session. Our assessment of what has happened recently forces us to conclude that there is a clear contradiction between the efforts of the international community to relaunch the negotiations, on the one hand, and the very serious developments on the ground, on the other.

Even though the international community had hoped that the Annapolis arrangements would lead to progress, Israel, for its part, has continued its collective punishment policy, its settlement activities and its expropriation of Arab property, which is then given to Israeli settlers.

In that context and a few days after a meeting on the subject by the General Assembly, the Israeli forces launched an attack against Gaza that killed more than 1,400 Palestinians and wounded 5,000 others, including women, children and the elderly. The Israeli forces did not spare homes, schools, mosques or hospitals treating the ill and wounded. After the declaration of the ceasefire and following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), a number of reports were produced. Those reports clearly revealed the scope of the crimes committed by the Israeli forces during their aggression in Gaza, where the most fundamental international humanitarian and human rights norms were violated.

We were first made aware of a summary of the report of the Commission of Inquiry that the Secretary-General had dispatched from United Nations Headquarters to investigate nine incidents involving United Nations facilities that led to deaths and injuries. This detailed summary of extremely serious events offers but a small selection of the terrible, widespread actions that are given specific attention in the report of

the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), some recommendations of which were adopted by the General Assembly on 5 November.

Another report was published in September, but it did not receive as much coverage as the two others. The report, entitled "Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip following the escalation of hostilities in December 2008-January 2009" and published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), addresses the consequences of the acts of war committed in the Gaza Strip, in particular the pollution of its already deteriorating environment, economy and living conditions. Among the conclusions of the UNEP report, which was prepared by international experts — including Israelis and Palestinians — was that, if the international community did not intervene, the consequences would last not merely for years, but for centuries. The scarcity of water resources could jeopardize the security of the population if minimal sanitary needs are not met.

The international community had hoped that after the ceasefire declaration, in keeping with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), Israel would stop these practices and end its policy of collective punishment of the Palestinian people, while at the same time halt its imposition of facts on the ground and its incremental seizure of Palestinian land. Unfortunately, Israel has in fact done the opposite, continuing its illegal settlement activity on the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and has grabbed more Arab property and land. It has chased Palestinians from their neighbourhoods to enable settlers to move in. Israel has also continued building the separation wall, fragmenting the Arab presence.

All these activities seek to alter the city's demographics and character. Israel has continued to attack the city's holy sites, undermining the Al-Aqsa mosque through excavations and tunnels beneath and around it, offering worthless justifications in an effort to mask its repeated attempts to violate freedom of worship at the mosque and the right of worshippers to access holy sites in safety and unconditionally. All of these excesses and policies flagrantly violate international legal decisions, the provisions of international law and the religious sensitivities of all faiths.

Our Kingdom and His Majesty Mohammed VI, Chairman of the Al Quds Committee, express our grave concern about these practices and activities, which seek to change the specifically Arab and Islamic nature of the holy city of Jerusalem, and we condemn them. Motivated by that sense of responsibility, and given that the city is of particular importance in the Arab-Israeli conflict, His Majesty has tirelessly sought to draw the attention of the United Nations, world Powers and religious leaders, in particular the Pope, to the dangers posed by these illegal, unilateral Israeli actions. In the face of activities that threaten the stability and security of the region, he has also urged them to shoulder their responsibilities and to help preserve the special character of Jerusalem, in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and earlier commitments undertaken by the parties.

Finally, the Kingdom of Morocco firmly condemns the decision of the Israeli Government to issue permits for 900 new units to be built in East Jerusalem; this is illegal and completely unacceptable. We also note the illicit and illegal nature of all Israeli settlement and construction activity in the West Bank. Moreover, Jerusalem must under no pretext be made the subject of an exemption. Given the suffering endured daily by the Arab population of the holy city, the Al Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference continues to offer support by undertaking social projects and creating social facilities managed by the Bayt-Mal-Al-Quds Agency.

The most recent meeting of the Al Quds Committee and the Yasser Arafat Institute, held on 28 and 29 October, affirmed that it was urgent that the international community end the illegal and immoral Israeli offences against Jerusalem and its places of worship. The meeting also called on Israel to respect freedom of religion and worship on the basis of the principle that Jerusalem is an inherent part of the occupied Palestinian territories, as set forth in the provisions of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Participants also called for the freedom of worship and holy sites to be respected and for greater tolerance and a strengthened spirit of coexistence.

In view of the importance of Al-Quds to the Arab and Islamic world, an important international meeting will be held at the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco, from 11 to 13 December to celebrate Jerusalem as the 2009 capital of Arab

culture. That international forum, to be held under the theme “Al-Quds in Arab and International Thought”, will address various issues, highlighting the important of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa mosque in Arab and Muslim consciousness, as well as the consequences of Israeli settlement for the city, its history and human heritage. The meeting will also focus on Palestinian culture in the context of occupation and the preservation of the Palestinian identity.

Our deep concern about the serious recent events in Palestine and the threat they pose to stability and security in the Middle East is accompanied by our firm and lasting belief that the peace process is an irrevocable choice and that its outcome will establish a just and comprehensive peace in the region, to the benefit of all its peoples, and thereby ensure their security and the restoration of their rights. On the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, the Kingdom of Morocco is committed to the Middle East peace process and, as a member of the implementation committee, participates in all international efforts aimed at the effective resumption of negotiations.

In that respect, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the efforts of President Obama to overcome the obstacles to the peace process and hopes that he will sustain them until the desired objective is achieved. We also commend the efforts of the international community, in particular the European Union, and hope that they will lead to the resumption of negotiations based on the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the agreements and understandings between the parties, and the Arab Peace Initiative — a courageous undertaking that reflects the Arab desire to achieve a fair and comprehensive solution to the conflict in the Middle East. That being said, the Initiative will be strengthened by the unity of the Palestinian people and by progress in meeting their commitments to the terms of the Quartet Road Map.

The Kingdom of Morocco reiterates once again its support for President Abbas because of his wisdom, his leadership and his pioneering role until the Palestinian dream — an independent, viable State with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security — is realized. In that regard, a comprehensive just and lasting peace in the Middle East will be possible only when Syria has regained sovereignty over the occupied Golan and

when Lebanon has recovered every centimetre of its land.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): My delegation first wishes to align itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt and Syria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively.

Sixty-two years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), proposing the partitioning of Palestine into two independent States, one Jewish and one Arab. However, to date, only one State has come into being. This is a situation that has resulted in the loss of many lives and whose effect reverberates not only in the Middle East, but worldwide. We must therefore undertake urgent, decisive action to bring order and stability to the region and to restart the peace process leading to a comprehensive and just solution. In so doing, we can give effect to what was provided for in resolution 181 (II).

It is apparent that the root cause of this problem is the illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories. The problems have been compounded throughout the decades by Israel's actions and intransigence in the following areas: first, atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza, which contravene the Geneva Conventions; secondly, lack of political commitment to follow through in the successive peace processes; thirdly, continuation and expansion of illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as the recent Israeli Government approval of the construction of 900 new settlement housing units in the settlement of Gilo, which is located on the south side of East Jerusalem; fourthly, forced evictions of the Palestinian people, demolition of homes and confiscation of Palestinian lands, including through the building of the separation wall, which continues to be built despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Such unlawful actions could alter the demographic composition, status and nature of East Jerusalem. They also negatively affect the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian territories, as well as the social fabric of the Palestinian people, in violation of international law; fifthly, imposition of measures that constitute a form of collective punishment, as is strictly forbidden under international humanitarian law. Such measures include the blockade of Gaza, which has restricted the passage of essential goods and construction materials to the vulnerable groups, the establishment of hundreds of

checkpoints and roadblocks, the permit system as well as other obstacles that have violated the Palestinians' right to freedom of movement.

The attacks on Palestinians by extremist Israeli settlers at the Islamic holy sites of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa mosque are further acts of impunity manifested by the Israeli regime in the occupied territories. We are alarmed at the increasing incidents of illegal acts of violence and attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians without much action by the Israeli authorities to stop or to hinder their occurrence. Such provocations have further worsened the already volatile situation in the occupied territories, especially in occupied East Jerusalem.

The dehumanization of the Palestinian people through such exploitation is not only illegal and immoral, but is counter-productive to the aim of achieving genuine and lasting peace. Israel cannot, as it has so often tried to do in the past, alter the way in which it is perceived by the international community by listing, at the United Nations and other forums, actions it has undertaken to lessen the sufferings of the Palestinians. Israel must recognize itself as it is and that it is a source of conflict in the Middle East.

It is therefore manifestly clear that peace in the Middle East will only be achieved when the international community succeeds in its efforts to have Israel recognize its wrongdoings and to hold Israel accountable. Israel must improve the situation on the ground, including lifting the blockade in Gaza, addressing the humanitarian needs of the people of the occupied territories, fostering economic activities and improving the atmosphere for negotiations.

It is necessary that the international community refocus its energy and efforts to return to the Palestinians their inalienable rights, including the right to an independent State of Palestine. In that regard, we urge the Security Council to take the necessary decisive action against Israel's violations in the occupied Palestinian territory and to thus end the immoral culture of impunity of the Israeli regime.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Yesterday, we also marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all Palestinians who have suffered in their just struggle to live in freedom

and dignity in a State they can call their own. The people of Palestine can count on Malaysia's unceasing and unwavering support for their efforts to create an independent and sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Al-Allaf (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I express my gratitude and appreciation for the convening of this important meeting, which coincides with the International Day of Solidarity With the Palestinian People and renews the commitment of the international community to support and assist the Palestinian people in exercising their inalienable right to self-determination and establishing their independent State.

I also wish to express Jordan's appreciation for the historic role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and for the efforts of its Chairman, His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, and for the significant efforts by the Committee to preserve the United Nations historic responsibility to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people.

Here, I also mention the letter of appreciation for the Committee's efforts that His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein addressed yesterday to the Chairman of the Committee.

The situation in the Middle East is experiencing a highly delicate stage these days. The gap between the parties to the conflict has expanded and unilateral actions have increased. The level-headed thinking required to control tensions and prevent escalating violence is absent, as is the political will to achieve a permanent, just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem, which is at the core of the conflict in the Middle East.

Peace is the only option for the region. That requires the relevant parties to commit to serious negotiations, within the regional context, based on the two-State solution and the agreed terms of reference, in order to achieve comprehensive peace in the region. It is important that the negotiations resume at the point where the previous negotiations stopped and that they address all of the issues of a final solution, primary among which are the borders, Jerusalem, refugees and security.

International efforts to resume negotiations must be strengthened. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Jordan is continuing its efforts at all

levels in order to mobilize international support to launch the negotiation process between the Palestinians and the Israelis with the aim of achieving a peace agreement that guarantees the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable State on the occupied Palestinian territories based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That process must take place within a clear timetable and based on the accepted terms of reference, in particular the Arab Peace Initiative, which reflects a unified Arab position to achieve a comprehensive and permanent peace that guarantees true security and stability in the region.

The current situation in the Gaza Strip has become a human catastrophe, especially in the light of the continued Israeli blockade which constitutes a collective punishment of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip has turned into a giant prison. The siege and conflict must end and humanitarian relief supplies must be guaranteed unrestricted access. Those in need of medical attention must be allowed access to medical care and civilians should be allowed free and unrestricted movement. The international community must strive to ensure protection of the human rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Palestinian territories, not as an act of humanitarian charity but as a matter affecting Palestinian rights and the obligations and responsibilities of the international community.

In this respect, Jordan continues, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein, its efforts and contacts with the international community to urge it to end the stifling suffering of the Palestinian people and to provide assistance aimed at improving the living conditions of the Palestinians and preventing their deterioration. We call upon the international community, on the grounds of their legal and humanitarian responsibilities, to stand by their Palestinian brethren and provide emergency humanitarian relief and put an end to their human suffering.

The occupied territories today witness arbitrary Israeli practices against Palestinians and the Arab population that are completely contrary to any desire to achieve peace. In order to create a sincere impression of seeking peace Israel would have to immediately halt all practices that contradict its obligations as the occupying Power and international human rights and humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva

Convention. Any progress would require a change in the tragic reality and living conditions of the Palestinians in the occupied territories by revitalizing the Palestinian economy, which cannot be achieved without the elimination of the closures and the unjustified security checkpoints.

This year we witnessed a clear acceleration in the pace and volume of unilateral Israeli measures in occupied East Jerusalem, such as excavations underneath and around sites that are holy to Muslims and Christians, especially the holy sanctuary Al-Haram Al-Sharif and its surroundings, in addition to the policies of home demolitions and expulsion of the Arab population in a feverish attempt to change the identity and demographic structure of occupied East Jerusalem and to create obstacles in the management of Islamic endowment trusts. In this respect the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan emphasizes that all of these unilateral Israeli practices are illegal and illegitimate and constitute a serious violation of Israel's commitments and obligations, as the occupying Power in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. They also constitute an obstacle to the efforts to launch negotiations seeking to achieve a two-State solution and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities and must adopt a firm position to put a halt to all Israeli attacks and provocations in the occupied Arab territories.

Any harm to the holy city is, in the view of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and its leadership in the person of His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein, constitutes a red line and crossing it is unacceptable. Based on this position, the protection of Jerusalem will always be a Hashemite and Jordanian priority. Our country will spare no effort to protect Jerusalem and the Muslim and Christian holy places. Jerusalem enjoys a significant position of importance in the minds and hearts of tens of millions of Muslims and Christians throughout the world, which makes of such illegal provocations and actions sparks that could create a situation that threatens the foundations of international peace and security.

Israel's activities seek to create a new reality on the ground, to obliterate the Arab and Islamic features of Jerusalem and to affect the legal status of the city. These provocative measures could undermine the efforts of international parties to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Indeed, they threaten the entire negotiating process. Israel must put an immediate stop to these illegitimate violations and must abide by the provisions of the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement with regard to Jerusalem and the protection of the holy sites.

The unilateral Israeli declaration of a partial halt to settlements in the occupied West Bank is an insufficient step that does not fulfil the necessary conditions in the view of the international community seeking to achieve a two-State solution. The fact that East Jerusalem was not covered by this proposed hold on settlements is unacceptable and contradicts the international consensus that considered East Jerusalem to be part of the occupied territories in 1967. That consensus also acknowledges that Jerusalem is a principal item among the issues of the final status negotiations. The settlements themselves are a clear violation of international law, based on paragraph 120 of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories (A/ES-10/273).

Israeli actions linked to the construction of settlements, such as the expulsion of Palestinians and the demolition of their homes in several areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, also constitute a clear violation of international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention. In addition to all this, Israeli settlements constitute insurmountable burdens on the movement of Palestinians and on development in the Palestinian territories. The settlements also deprive Palestinians of the right to benefit from their land, their resources and their water sources. In this context, Jordan emphasizes the importance of a complete, direct and immediate cessation of all the illegal and condemned Israeli settlement activities, including the so-called natural growth of existing settlements. Just as settlement itself is illegitimate so is its so-called natural growth, which is also an unnatural and illegitimate activity. Settlement and peace are opposites that cannot meet. Settlement activities undermine the chances for the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil. The feverish continuation of settlement activities is a direct and grave threat to the prospects for peace in the entire region.

In conclusion, a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, which is the core of the conflict in the Middle East, is a key to the resolution of

other conflicts and a guarantee to the peace and stability of the region. Our region is eager for peace, and peace can only be achieved through the two-State solution, an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking the President of the Assembly for scheduling this meeting on the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this occasion, Bangladesh unites with the international community in reaffirming its full support for the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and freedom from continued occupation. Bangladesh stands firm in its position on the Arab-Israeli conflict in favour of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I would, however, like to mention some issues of concern to us.

The Palestinian issue has always been a serious concern for Bangladesh. Our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, on this Day of Solidarity expressed our unwavering support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for their right of self-determination and statehood.

Bangladesh reiterates its long-standing position that the continued occupation of Palestine is the root cause of violence, unrest and destabilization in the region. The people of Palestine have been under illegal occupation over the past four decades. Unfortunately, it appears to be a collective failure on the part of the international community that their fundamental rights to self-determination and a sovereign State have remained unrealized.

It is also unfortunate that Israel, whose people had experienced sufferings in the past, has continued to violate international humanitarian law by committing systematic human rights violations against the Palestinian people. The people of Palestine are being denied their fundamental rights to self-determination and to live freely in their own land, and displaced Palestinians have been denied their right to return home in dignity and safety. We believe that the

establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital is the only sustainable solution to this long-lasting conflict.

Bangladesh strongly condemns the illegal expansion of settlements that Israel has undertaken by grabbing Palestinian lands. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the construction of the separation wall threaten to derail the ongoing peace negotiations. As the construction of the wall in disregard of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion continues unabated, the occupied territories are increasingly being fragmented into smaller parts, which will seriously affect the viability of a sovereign, stable, peaceful and independent Palestine State.

According to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict — the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48) — there is evidence indicating that serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law were committed by Israel during its military operations in Gaza from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009, and that Israel had committed actions tantamount to war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity. The situation in East Jerusalem seriously deteriorated, with land confiscations, house demolitions and evictions of Palestinian residents and the transfer of more Israeli settlers. Homes, schools, medical facilities and even United Nations buildings took direct hits.

We are deeply concerned at the violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by Israel as reported in the Goldstone report. We trust that implementation of the recommendations of the Goldstone report will help create an opportunity to put an end to impunity for violations of international law in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory.

My delegation wishes to draw attention to the fact that Israel, as a signatory to the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which sets forth the responsibilities of an occupying Power, cannot legally or morally absolve itself of its responsibilities to guarantee the basic human rights of the people under its occupation. The General Assembly and the Security Council, in their resolutions adopted over the years, have reconfirmed Israel's obligation to ensure the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Bangladesh believes that only full and sincere implementation of

the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions can resolve the Palestinian crisis.

A durable and sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is the core of the long-lasting crisis, must be our collective strategic objective. All Member States must pledge complete commitment to this objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization. Bangladesh is ready to play a supportive role in this collective endeavour to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

In conclusion, in order to achieve a lasting solution in the Middle East, it is very important to address the key issue, which is the illegal Israeli occupation of the Arab territories. The solution therefore requires Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and all other occupied Arab lands. We reiterate that the creation of a Palestinian State, coexisting peacefully alongside Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, is the only sustainable solution to the conflict that may bring peace to the region. The Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant resolutions are the best guides for achieving a two-State solution.

Mr. Sipangule (Zambia): My delegation welcomes this debate on agenda items 15 and 16, on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, respectively. As clearly stated in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/64/351, the United Nations remains and will continue to be central for the promotion of a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is, in fact, the core of any success in achieving global peace and stability in the Middle East.

The Zambian delegation fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in our national capacity, we wish to make one additional cardinal point.

The General Assembly, together with the Security Council, correctly foresaw the ultimate solution to problem of the Middle East about 60 years ago, when it adopted the principle of a two-State solution. That principle, which remains valid today, provides for two States and two peoples living side by side in peace and security. This ultimate solution was clearly elaborated

in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and has been reaffirmed by subsequent Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) up to resolution 1850 (2008), which unfortunately was sidelined when a military solution was promoted over a negotiated solution between the key parties to the conflict.

One year ago, on 26 November 2008, the Assembly — realizing that, notwithstanding the desire of the Israelis, the Palestinians and the larger international community to set the goal of a two-State solution, no major steps had been taken by the international community in that direction — adopted resolution 63/29. That Assembly action, taken with the largest support in history, reaffirmed the undisputed historical and socio-economic viability of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Zambia wishes to appeal to the key participants in the conflict to seize this opportunity to crown those two years of multilateral efforts to deliver peace and security in the Middle East in general and to the suffering Palestinian people in particular.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Zambia, a country that maintains full diplomatic relations with both the State of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, continues to support the two-State solution to this conflict. In bilateral relations with both parties, the Zambian Government has urged and continues to urge both to negotiate in good faith on the core issues in the conflict on which the premises for any comprehensive agreement can be based. Those issues are the status of Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, borders, security and even water.

In our view, the international community needs to sustain support to both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority in order to build the required confidence for them to revert to the original United Nations plan for the region — the two-State solution, by which two States for two peoples exist side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): Yesterday in the Trusteeship Council Chamber we participated in a very moving day. Together, we attended a celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I do not think that we just did that out of habit, not at all. I do not think that those who were there — the many

representatives of civil society, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and even representatives from the Jewish community — acted out of habit, either.

We were moved by the need to express our active solidarity towards a justice-loving people, a people that is suffering — human beings, like us. Yesterday we did not have the feeling that we were attending a campaign against Israel, far from it. On the contrary, we heard measured statements by speakers who expressed themselves on the basis on facts, known and undeniable facts — and, so far, irrefutable facts.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is working tirelessly so that we do not forget the tragic fate forced on the Palestinian people. I wish to congratulate the Committee for its perseverance in its useful and necessary work demanding our awareness of the fate of a people fighting for its freedom. I would like to say that yesterday the Committee excelled in its presentation of the situation, in the rigour of its impartial analysis of, as I said, irrefutable facts. I congratulate our colleague Ambassador Badji, who is, in our view, the most noteworthy member of the Committee, which is doing such excellent work.

Moreover, we did not have the impression yesterday that we were expressing any hostility towards Israel, far from it. I am not here today before the Assembly to participate in some sort of alleged trial against Israel, not at all. We are here to demonstrate our solidarity towards a people. We are here because we have the very profound feeling that an injustice must be rectified. We all have the feeling that something must be done, and done quickly, so that we can be in conformity with the well-known resolution adopted here in the General Assembly — not in New York City, because it was in 1947, but in any case, 62 years ago, almost to the day. I am pleased that a while ago someone mentioned that important resolution.

We are not here in an echo chamber. We are not acting mechanically. We are officials who have the intention to fully shoulder our responsibilities. It is up to the international community to ensure international legality, to ensure respect for the principles that guide international relations so that peace can exist in the Middle East and so that peace will be lasting and based on the fundamental principles that regulate today's international relations.

For a long time, we have repeatedly said how we were and remain against the actions of the Israeli authorities in Palestine, in the occupied Arab territories. We have always maintained in a very determined way that that situation is unjust and that we cannot accept it. Today, we must note that the situation is stagnating, as we saw in the report in document A/64/35, which was tabled yesterday on behalf of the Committee by the Ambassador of Malta.

Stagnation — there is no progress; things are not moving forward, and we could even say that the situation is becoming much more complicated. So what do we do except to say, to repeat, to try to convince our Israeli friends of the need to cast a much more serene gaze on what is happening in their country and around them so that they can hear what the rest of the international community is saying.

We have always said here that we cannot accept the wall that was built illegally. That wall is simply unacceptable, not only because the International Court of Justice said as much in its advisory opinion, but also because the wall, which snakes through territories that belong to the Palestinians, is in the process of creating a horrible injustice. The wall separates neighbours, it separates people who, before it, associated with each other. The wall prevents children from going to school. The wall keeps believers from going to the mosque or to church. The wall is in taking away the veritable soul of the Palestinians. We thus cannot accept it.

I would like to say here that this wall could also be a type of alienation of our Israeli friends from their own history. Walls, barbed wire and watchtowers should conjure up some very bad memories for our friends. I think they should not accept the construction of this wall because it represents a true laceration in the body and soul of the Palestinians. That is unacceptable.

I also say that it is high time that the Palestinians reconcile among and with themselves. We are friends, and we have to challenge them to reunify, so that they will come together around the core principle — the inalienable right of their people to self-determination. The differences should be silenced. Our Palestinian friends should be able to sit down at the same table to lift the standard of liberty, to struggle for the self-determination of their people. That is what I would like to say to them today, here and now, with a great deal of sincerity.

Those living in Gaza are no less Palestinian than people living elsewhere, on the West Bank or in the diaspora. They are human beings, just like each of us, who deserve that we think about their fate, who deserve that we be struck by the barbaric acts they have been subjected to. They have been harassed, attacked, bombed, day and night, violently. I think that above and beyond humanitarian questions and humanitarian aspects that bring us here today, we must also cast our eyes on the fate befalling those living in that part of Palestine.

And I would like to say that we are grateful to the Secretary-General for displaying such determination in his quest for a fair, lasting solution in the Middle East. I would also like to thank the members of the Quartet for their efforts and say that we are with them, we are behind them to support their commitments and efforts to achieve a lasting resolution of this conflict.

We have heard some statements here that could give rise to some irritation, but I think we are reasonable people. We all wish to work for peace. We should certainly be disposed to show patience, but we also need to continue to show determination to bring to the Palestinian people all the support that they need, to give them active solidarity that will not fail them, to say to all who might like to listen that we are not against anybody, that we are not showing hostility towards anyone, that we wish to work for peace, a lasting peace that benefits all peoples in the region.

I conclude by saying that as long as this question is not resolved, as long as the inalienable right of the Palestinian people is not fulfilled, as long as children, women, seniors — in short, human beings — are subject to barbaric acts, as long as they continue to suffer, we will be there to add our voice to the clamour that is rising here in this Chamber, in this General Assembly Hall, to say “no” to what is unacceptable, to refuse what is illegal, to come out against actions that go against the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the freedom of peoples.

Mr. Ba-Omar (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to extend, on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, our thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the Committee's comprehensive report in document A/64/35. I cannot fail to mention that we highly appreciate his efforts, as

well as those of the other members of the Committee, in supporting the Palestinian people in their just cause. We would also like to thank him for his comprehensive statement on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (see A/64/PV.51).

There is no doubt that our meeting today acquires special importance with regard to an issue that has been before the international community for far too long, particularly since the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is increasingly deteriorating. The international community cannot sit silent and allow the situation to deteriorate further. More than 50 years of murder, expulsion and destruction of infrastructure have not broken the will of the Palestinian people to demand their legitimate rights, including the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Government of Oman expresses its deep concern regarding the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the continued Israeli blockade and the cruel humanitarian crisis imposed on the Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, the campaigns of settler occupation, the separation wall and other illegal actions carried out by Israel in Holy Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, and its desecration of religious and spiritual holy places.

Today marks the celebration of the thirty-second International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which in 1977 embodied the firm position that the international community has taken in support of the Palestinian people in their struggle for their legitimate and inalienable rights. This day also coincides with the sixty-second anniversary of the adoption in 1947 of resolution 181 (II), which provided for the partition of Palestine into two States. Nevertheless, the Palestinian people are still deprived of their legitimate rights, national sovereignty and independence and of their right to self-determination. That has resulted in more than 4 million Palestinian refugees suffering the scourge of exile, diaspora and deprivation.

The aspirations of the Palestinian people have been and are still directed to this international forum in the hope that it will protect them from the intransigence and oppression of successive Israeli Governments and their inhuman and illegal practices. The international community should take a firm, serious stand against all those practices.

Earlier this year we saw the destructive results of the war against Gaza and the flagrant violations of human rights. We should send a clear, unambiguous message demanding that Israel put an end to those policies and start genuine negotiations to establish the foundations for security and stability in the region, on the basis of the framework of the peace process, including the principle of land for peace and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In that regard, my delegation welcomed the adoption of Assembly resolution 64/10 on 5 November 2009, on the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), and the inclusion by the Assembly of recommendations of that report in its resolution. We hope that all relevant United Nations entities, including the Security Council, will seriously consider them.

My delegation would also like to express its deep concern regarding the continued occupation of Arab territories in the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon, Israel's daily violations of Lebanese air, land and sea space in clear violation of Council resolution 1701 (2006) and its illegal actions to change the demographic and natural makeup of the occupied Syrian Golan. We call on Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories and start serious negotiations with the parties concerned.

Oman has always been among the countries that welcomed the peace process and considered it a natural and civilized way to settle disagreements through dialogue and negotiations. On that basis, we call on the parties concerned and the sponsors of the peace process to play an effective role in reaching a settlement of the Middle East conflict, in view of the gravity of the situation in the region and the crises seen there recently.

That will require the Security Council and the Quartet to shoulder their responsibilities by responding positively to the Arab Peace Initiative and to call for convening a peace conference to be attended by the Arab parties, Israel and the permanent members of the Security Council, with a view to reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on all tracks, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the principle of land for peace. Let us hope that the fruit of that conference will be the embodiment of the vision of establishing a Palestinian

State, living side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders.

In concluding, we call on the international community to support the peace efforts in the Middle East, for a peace that can be achieved only through the recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State within the 1967 borders, including Jerusalem, and to live in peace in a sovereign State within internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela supports the draft resolutions before the Assembly today and thus aligns itself with the statement by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/64/PV.51).

The Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela join in the clamour demanding an end, unequivocally and without further delay, to the Israeli presence in the occupied territories as a basic prerequisite for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East and for the definitive establishment of a free and sovereign Palestinian State.

Today we remember that 62 years ago the General Assembly adopted the historic resolution 181 (II), calling for the creation of two States in the territory of Palestine. The State of Israel was founded in 1948 and has now existed for 61 years. The Palestinian State has yet to be born, having fallen prey to the genocidal aggression of Israel.

On 27 November 2009 the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, met in Caracas to strengthen the historical ties between their peoples. President Abbas visited various countries in Latin America, where he was welcomed with signs of solidarity with the Palestinian cause. In welcoming President Abbas to Venezuela, our President, Hugo Chávez, said:

“We salute the heroic Palestinian people, a people with a long history of struggle, spirituality and sacrifice. The Bolivarian Revolution from the beginning has sided with the Palestinian people. We have always been on the side of the Palestinian people in their memorable fight against the Yankee empire, their lackeys and the genocidal State of Israel, which bulldozes, kills

and attempts to exterminate the Palestinian people. All those who fight for justice on this planet join their voices to those of the Palestinian people.”

In a speech before the National Assembly, the parliament of Venezuela, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas stated:

“We demand that the international community and the world understand that for 60 years, Palestine has wanted to live as a free, peaceful, independent and sovereign State and people, like the other countries in the world. ... We have inherited the task of building a democratic State in Palestine where Jews, Christians and Muslims can live on equal terms.”

The Presidents of Venezuela and the Palestinian National Authority signed a framework cooperation agreement between the two countries, which involves the development of social, economic, educational, agricultural, scientific and cultural programmes, among others. They also signed a memorandum of understanding on university-level education for training Palestinian professionals in undergraduate and graduate programmes at various institutions of higher education in Venezuela.

During Mr. Abbas' visit to the national parliament, that body issued a declaration stating that, to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East, the State of Israel must recognize each and every one of the rights of the Palestinian nation, put an end to the occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories and to the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, dismantle the Israeli settlements and resolve the Palestinian refugee issue. The slaughter of the Palestinian people, the demolition of their houses, the systematic destruction of orchards and olive groves, the dismantling and destruction of basic civic infrastructure and the imprisonment of the Palestinian people must cease.

Venezuela recalls the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, drafted under the leadership of Richard Goldstone, of 16 October 2009 (A/HRC/12/48), and its condemnation of the multiple and massive violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention characterized as war crimes committed by the Israeli occupying forces — executions, torture, inhumane treatment, use of human shields and physical and psychological harm to the

Palestinian population during Operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009.

Furthermore, it recalls the conclusions of the Goldstone report referring to the long and sinister blockade of Gaza by the occupying Power, Israel, including deprivation of the basic means of sustenance: jobs, water, shelter, the right to movement and a court of justice, *inter alia*. Israel remains the occupying Power in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip, and therefore it has specific obligations under the Geneva Convention to protect the occupied population. But instead of protecting the Palestinian people as required under international law, the Government of Israel systematically exterminates it.

We cannot forget the situation facing the Palestinian people in the West Bank, with more than 600 check points and control points, which impede their free movement and development, nor can we forget the construction of an ominous and illegal wall on Palestinian territory, nor the acts of aggression, the attacks and the killings of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Venezuela categorically rejects the violent attacks by Israeli extremists against the Palestinians gathered in holy places — the mosques Al-Haram al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa.

We can never equate the genocidal Government of Israel with those Palestinian forces who, under the protection of inalienable historic rights and in the exercise of their legitimate self-defence, resist the criminal aggression against their nation and their people. We would like to recall that the Revolutionary Government of President Hugo Chávez Frías suspended diplomatic relations with the Government of Israel following its brutal invasion of Gaza and is not prepared to resume them until the inhumane harassment of the Palestinian people ceases.

The Israeli authorities, responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity, must be brought before in the International Criminal Court. It is time for them to be held accountable under international law. How many more crimes must they commit before they have to answer to the international rule of law? The Security Council cannot evade its responsibilities in this matter; it must echo the cry of the peoples of the world demanding justice for the Palestinian people.

In organizing this important meeting of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine, I think

we should remember the poetic song of Mahmoud Darwish:

“We love life whenever we can.

We steal a thread from a silkworm to weave
a sky ...”.

Mr. Hernández-Milian (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): When on 5 February 2008 Costa Rica recognized the State of Palestine, it did so honouring an historic commitment to that people, especially since we were one of the 33 countries that voted in favour of the resolution that approved the 1947 Partition Plan for Palestine (resolution 181 (II)). In speaking in this debate, my country would like to build bridges. Today we extend a hand of solidarity to the Palestinian people, and we hope that in the near future we will no longer have to fill the Assembly’s archives with attacks and rhetorical messages that do not contribute anything substantive to peace in the region.

We are concerned by the demonstrations of violence that are still going on, because they create greater tension and they do not help to provide the conditions for renewing the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is still a cause for concern.

Costa Rica understands the legitimate concerns of Israelis with regard to their security and calls on the Palestinian authorities to continue to monitor the activities of extremist elements that are involved in acts of terrorism. At the same time, we also feel that it is imperative to lift the restrictions imposed by Israel on access to the goods and humanitarian aid so urgently needed by the population of Gaza, particularly given the upcoming winter.

Recently, new obstacles to rapprochement between the parties have emerged, moving them further away from negotiations on the core issues of the conflict. One was the authorization by the Government of Israel to build new settlements, in addition to continuing its policy of demolition of Palestinian houses and eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem. The Israeli policy of settlements expansion in occupied territories, in addition to weakening those who are called on to be their interlocutors in the negotiations, adds to the distrust between the parties and endangers any possibility for a solution to the conflict. The Palestinians need to know that the negotiations are credible.

On the other hand, we call upon the Palestinians to redouble efforts conducive to genuine national reconciliation — a condition that is necessary for holding credible elections and for moving the peace process forward. Although President Abbas and his team have established guidelines to improve the security conditions and to free their people from violence, Palestinian unity has been systematically weakened by radical sectors that represent an obstacle to the well-being of the people they claim to be defending.

We are concerned about the announcement of the Palestinian Central Elections Commission with regard to the cancellation of the elections that were planned for next January, because the Palestinian people and the international community need to continue to count on legitimate leadership in order to move the peace process forward. Israel also needs valid interlocutors who are able to negotiate and end the conflict. The absence of that leadership will only weaken the commitment to the peace process.

It is indispensable that there be a renewal of negotiations between the parties on the final objectives, without conditions and without detriment to the agreements already reached. We have heard both parties express the desire to find a solution to the conflict on the basis of two States, and good use should be made of that. That commitment should not be marginalized.

It is up to the international community to assume the responsibility of providing a favourable context for the reactivation of the negotiating process. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have a huge responsibility, particularly those States that have greater influence over the parties.

Costa Rica is convinced that the only sustainable solution to the conflict in the Middle East is one that is founded on absolute respect for international law, including the fulfilment of the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative. Today, the path to sustainable peace involves observance of international humanitarian law without reservation and absolute respect for human rights. The objective of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace within internationally recognized borders can only be based on international law, not on force. In this context, the Arab countries are strategic partners in

building peace and should therefore contribute to helping the Palestinian Authority prevent this conflict from serving as an excuse for actions by extremist groups.

The parties must focus negotiations on the core issues of the conflict: Jerusalem, borders, refugees, settlements and security. This was in essence one of the messages that the President of my country, Óscar Arias, recently took to the region when he visited Israel and Palestine and held constructive meetings with leaders of both parties. Costa Rica is aware of its limited influence in a place where the major Powers of the world have failed time and again. However, we take to both parties the message of a faithful friend who has no other interest in the region than that of contributing to peace.

During President Arias's visit, Costa Rica shared with the other parties its experience as a small democracy that lives without an army and entrusts its security to law, the international community and its multilateral mechanisms. We welcomed the interest shown by the Palestinian authorities in our experiences and we shared with both parties the conviction that, provided there are appropriate conditions in place for peaceful regional coexistence, building a military structure in the Palestinian State would not seem to make sense.

Today more than ever before, we need bold measures to build trust and good will as the basis for a lasting and sustainable peace. In the Middle East, there will be no final victory of one over the other. In the end, peace will be the fruit of pragmatic voices that accept the coexistence of two independent States that wish to live in peace and security.

Mr. Ali (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Mr. Paul Badji, who yesterday organized an important ceremony to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. We would like to emphasize once again our complete and unreserved solidarity with and support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people in their just cause to recover their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to defy the international community by depriving the Palestinian people of their rights and violating international, international humanitarian and international human rights law. It pursues these actions in inhumane and illegal ways that violate the rights of the Palestinians in their occupied territories. That is clear to all and has recently been emphasized in a number of United Nations reports, including the report of Special Rapporteur Richard Falk on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 (A/64/328), a United Nations report investigating incidents that took place during Israel's invasion of Gaza, and the combined report (A/HRC/10/22) presented by 10 Special Rapporteurs on 20 March 2009 to the Human Rights Council regarding Israel's siege of Gaza, which called for the blockade to be lifted and for the import of basic necessities, fuel, construction and agricultural materials into Gaza and for the free movement of people to work and hospitals.

In addition, the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/8/17) noted serious breaches of human rights during the Israeli aggression in Gaza. Finally, the comprehensive report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), headed by Judge Richard Goldstone, which we considered in this Assembly, led to the adoption of the important resolution 64/10 on that subject.

Israel's destructive aggression in besieged Gaza has caused the deaths of thousands of people in Gaza and wounded and disabled many, including women and children, as well as the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, universities, factories, businesses, places of worship, and United Nations facilities. Crossing points into Gaza remain closed, besieging 1.5 million people in Gaza. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel continues its settlement activities, its destruction of Palestinian property and its appropriation of fertile lands in an attempt to alter the demographic nature of the region, prevent the establishment of a Palestinian State and influence the final status negotiations.

The Palestinians continue to suffer from the construction of the apartheid wall in the West Bank, in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the building of the wall. The Palestinians suffer incarceration and detention, even of children, and aggression by Israeli

settlers. In 2009, checkpoints in the occupied territories numbered 688. The Palestinians cannot enjoy their rights to water, food, work, clothing, shelter, health, education and, indeed, life. The Israelis continue to enlarge their settlements in East Jerusalem by confiscating land, bringing in settlers, destroying homes and chasing out the Palestinians as they Judaize the city and alter its demographic character. They excavate in and around the Al-Aqsa mosque, in disregard for Muslim sensitivities around the world.

Hundreds of resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), have demanded that Israel withdraw from occupied Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan. Nevertheless, Israel has increased the number of settlers in the Golan, inter alia, by building infrastructure, businesses, water and other natural resources. Israel consistently violates the civil and political rights of the Syrian people of the occupied Golan and continues to disperse Syrian families and to prevent the United Nations from accessing the territory. In addition, the Syrian population is suffering from anti-personnel mines and the dumping of nuclear waste in some occupied areas. We also ask Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territories, including Kfar Shuba and Al-Ghajar village in southern Lebanon.

We have always supported the Palestinian people and their fight against injustice and occupation. The United Nations must assume its historic responsibility to ensure a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian cause, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, by pressuring Israel to withdraw fully from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to give the Palestinians the right to return to their land and establish their independent State, based on hundreds of resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Zhang Yesui (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Yesterday, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Premier Wen Jiabao of China sent a message of solidarity to the Committee, expressing support for the just cause of the Palestinian people in seeking their national independence. Today, the consideration of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East in the General Assembly is of particular significance. We hope that this meeting will give new impetus to relaunching the Middle East peace process.

Two years after the Annapolis meeting, the peace process in the Middle East is again at a crossroads. We hoped that Palestine and Israel would have advanced towards negotiations for a just and lasting peace and have achieved results. However, it is regrettable that the situation there is still tumultuous and negotiations remain deadlocked. Despite the tireless efforts of the parties concerned to resolve the situation in the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine, there has been no major breakthrough in the political process. The situation on the ground has been marked by some very alarming events and tendencies.

Late last year and early this year, the military actions of Israel in Gaza caused grave casualties and the destruction of property. They not only triggered a severe humanitarian crisis, but also set back the Middle East peace process. Israel's disproportionate use of force is unacceptable. The facts have shown that until the question of Palestine is decisively resolved, there can be no guarantee of peace and stability in the Middle East.

We express serious concern about the grave humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular Gaza. With the onset of winter, the humanitarian situation in Gaza may continue to deteriorate. We appeal to all parties concerned to resolutely implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and urge Israel to open all border crossings in response to the international community's appeal and to allow humanitarian and reconstruction materials enter Gaza without hindrance so as to facilitate Gaza's prompt reconstruction. The international community should actively provide socio-economic development assistance to Palestine, speedily honour its commitments and alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The Palestinian people of the West Bank and East Jerusalem also deserve our sympathy. Israel continues to expand its settlements and to construct the separation wall. Its violations of its obligations under international law do not promote its own security. We call on Israel to completely cease the construction of settlements and the separation wall, lift all obstructions to the movement of the Palestinian people and cease any action that might complicate the situation of Jerusalem.

The content of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict to the

Human Rights Council (A/HRC/12/48) is a source of concern. Violence and all actions that violate international human rights law are unacceptable. We call on both sides to carry out independent and credible investigations of the actions that gravely violated international law.

Achieving comprehensive, just and lasting peace is the common expectation of the international community. We have always believed that political negotiation is the only correct way and that the use of force cannot lead to a solution. At a time when the Middle East peace process still faces various challenges, we hope that the two sides can reaffirm their faith in the peace negotiations, adhere to the path to peace, overcome differences and obstacles, resume negotiations as soon as possible and desist from taking any action that might undermine trust and harm the peace process. We support the demands of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights and for the establishment of an independent country. We hope that the Palestinian factions can reconcile as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the international community should continue to strive to promote peace in the Middle East. We support the two sides on the basis of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative in order to achieve, by means of negotiation, the two-State solution whereby Arabs and Jews can live side by side in peace.

The international community should continue to focus on the other issues in the Middle East peace process. We welcome the significant progress in the situation of Lebanon. We hope that the Lebanese parties can uphold the Doha agreement, strengthen their unity and make common efforts to safeguard national peace, stability and development. We respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon and call on all parties to implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). The negotiations between Syria and Israel and Lebanon and Israel are important components of the peace process. We hope that the parties can work together to create conditions conducive to the resumption of the negotiations.

China has always supported an early, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East issue. We have supported and actively participated in the efforts of the

international community to promote peace, stability and development, including by providing economic and humanitarian assistance to the best of our ability. China will remain committed to promoting the Middle East peace process and is ready to work with the rest of the international community in playing a constructive role in order to achieve the two-State solution and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Mr. Jomaa (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Yesterday, we all observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, an occasion that reminds us of the continuing daily suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people and the tragic situation that necessitates the further intensive efforts of the international community and all relevant parties to find an immediate and appropriate solution to the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We observe the International Day at a time when the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is seriously deteriorating, owing to Israel's ongoing actions against the brotherly Palestinian people, including its siege, confiscation of land, violation of holy places and excessive settlement expansion policies. Israel's actions also create impossible conditions that set up additional obstacles to revitalizing the peace process at a time when the international community is trying to support the negotiation process so as to achieve peace, stability and security in the region.

Our country believes in the principles of right, justice and international legitimacy, upholds the principles of international law and has always supported the just Palestinian cause. Tunisia wishes to reaffirm once again from this rostrum its consistent support for the struggle of the heroic Palestinian people and expresses its full solidarity with their struggle to recover their legitimate national rights and to establish an independent State on their own territory.

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has consistently affirmed, in various regional and international forums and on numerous national occasions, the importance of the Palestinian cause, which we consider to be our primary issue and to which we give special attention. In his message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity, the President also wrote:

“Tunisia is anxious to see all the legitimate rights of the fraternal Palestinian people restored

to them. We therefore renew our call to all international parties concerned to step up their efforts to compel Israel to comply with the requirements for peace. These include, primarily, bringing a complete halt to settlement activities and to attempts to change the geographic and demographic status of the city of Jerusalem, and acknowledging the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State within its own borders and in the framework of a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement based on international law, the terms of reference of the peace process, the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution.”

The President also emphasized in his message

“the continued support of Tunisia for the efforts of the United Nations and various international parties to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to enable them to realize their aspirations to sovereignty, independence and a dignified life in their own territories in peace and stability”.

The Secretary-General's recent report to the Security Council on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (A/64/351) contains information that has caused grave concern. The General Assembly referred to that same information in warning that the deadlock in the peace process presaged growing insecurity and the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

It is thus the collective and historical responsibility of the States Members of this international Organization to seek to avoid a recurrence of the crises, such as Israel's incursion into the Gaza Strip, that have worsened the tragic situation in the Middle East in general and the Palestinian territories in particular. That incursion into Gaza resulted in grave loss of life and property and was the subject of the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), led by Judge Richard Goldstone, which made recommendations that the General Assembly incorporated into resolution 64/10, adopted on 5 November.

Tunisia calls on all influential parties, particularly the Quartet, to take effective measures to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and their tragic situation. We also emphasize the need to compel Israel

to end its illegitimate practices and aggressive policies towards the Palestinian people. We also call on the international community as a whole to consolidate, strengthen and support the negotiations in order to achieve the peace sought by all peoples of the region on the basis of international law, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In conclusion, I would like to express my country's appreciation for the Organization's continued efforts in support of the Palestinian cause, and particularly those of 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.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.