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New York

President: Mr. Kutesa (Uganda)

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

Agenda item 36

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/69/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/371)

Draft resolutions (A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24)

The President: This morning, I attended the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I thank the Committee once again for its work, including raising awareness on the unresolved question of Palestine. The International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 68/12, reflects the desire of the international community to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a final peace agreement.

This year has not brought the progress we were hoping for, as the direct peace talks were suspended. The violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which erupted almost immediately after the failure of the last round of negotiations, led to the death and injury of scores of civilians and the destruction of property. We must condemn all acts of violence against

civilians. I call on all parties to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions and incitement.

I remain concerned at the current impasse in the peace process. The situation is untenable, and it only prolongs the uncertainty, instability and insecurity that is so detrimental to both Palestinians and Israelis. It is important that the parties resume talks and make their best efforts to create an environment conducive to the resumption of direct negotiations. The international community should continue to support the parties in overcoming their differences and returning to direct talks within a clear framework based on internationally recognized parameters. The United Nations should play a more decisive role in supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement in the Middle East, based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized boundaries.

Finally, I wish to commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the vital role that it has continued to play in providing services to alleviate the suffering of the growing Palestinian refugee population. The recurring cycles of violence and the scarcity of funds have impacted the Agency's ability to provide basic humanitarian services. Taking into account the fact that the largest percentage of the Agency's funding comes from voluntary contributions, I reiterate my strong appeal to Member States and other international partners to make additional efforts to fully fund the

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Agency's core budget. I also urge new donors to make financial commitments to the Agency's work.

I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal, who will introduce, on behalf of the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, draft resolutions A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24.

Mr. Thiaw (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I shall now read out the following statement on behalf of Ambassador Fodé Seck.

“At the outset, I thank all delegations and you, Mr. President, personally for your active participation in the special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, held this morning to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The messages and statements received show the general will of the international community as a whole, represented by the United Nations Organization, to arrive at a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, namely, one with two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace.

“One year ago, the General Assembly declared that 2014 would be the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in the hope that, following the adoption of resolution 67/19 in 2012, recognizing Palestine as an observer State, that decision would mark a new step in the efforts aimed at resuming and supporting negotiations between Israel and Palestine. At the time, we expressed the hope that the State of Palestine would by now be a sovereign and independent Member State of the United Nations.

“However, our hopes did not come to fruition. The concerns of the past year, including those raised by the increase in the illegal Israeli settlements, have not abated. Instead, they have increased. Rather than seeing progress in the direct negotiations, we witnessed in 2014 a resurgence of violence, which started in the West Bank in May and June. That continued in Gaza over the summer and just recently erupted on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem.

“The Committee denounced Israel's heavy-handed military operations in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, which amounted to collective punishment. It strongly condemned

Israel's disproportionate use of military force in Gaza during the war this summer, and it recently criticized the incursions by Israeli extremists and political leaders, including high-level Government figures, in the esplanade of the Mosque and all attempts to impose Israeli rule on Haram al-Sharif. At the same time, the Committee condemned the many rocket attacks from Gaza, indiscriminately targeting Israeli civilians, and condemned the heinous attack last week in Jerusalem on Israeli worshippers.

“Under those circumstances, all the parties that continue to actively work to curb the negative waves of violence, including the United States, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League and the United Nations, indeed deserve our praise and the full support of the international community in their work.

“I would like to pay tribute to the Governments of the States that have recognized the State of Palestine. As of today, 135 States — over two thirds of the 193 Member States — have done so. And I urge the remaining ones to do the same. That is a tangible step forward towards ending the conflict and a sign of genuine commitment on the part of the international community to achieving a just and lasting peace, and to supporting the Palestinian people in the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination.

“Over the course of the past year, our Committee has continued its work to build on the momentum generated by the adoption of resolution 67/19, which raised the status of Palestine to an observer State in the United Nations. We strongly supported the resumption of negotiations aimed at a two-State solution. Despite the failure of the latest round of talks, negotiations remain the only viable way of reaching a final solution, but they must be based on clear parameters and a defined time frame.

“The State of Palestine has made great strides this year in building its State. We welcome its accession to a number of international conventions and other instruments, and we also welcomed the formation, following the Gaza War, of a national consensus Government, which has undertaken to comply with internationally accepted norms and principles. The Committee strongly supports the State of Palestine in its efforts to heal its internal

wounds and act as a responsible member and an integral part of the international community. We urge all Member States to fully cooperate with the new Palestinian Government.

“Our Committee firmly believes that the United Nations should continue to bear its abiding responsibility vis-à-vis the question of Palestine until that issue is effectively resolved in all its aspects, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. We call on the Security Council to take decisive measures to implement its resolutions on the question of Palestine and to fulfil its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. The Committee will, for its part, continue to fulfil its mandate conferred on it by the General Assembly to create the necessary international atmosphere that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

“In that context, I would like to introduce to the Assembly the four draft resolutions adopted by the Committee and circulated under this agenda item, namely, A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24. There have been broad consultations with regional groups on the draft resolutions, and they were adopted by the Committee. The first three draft resolutions deal with the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information. The General Assembly would reaffirm the importance of the mandates entrusted to those entities. As in the past, the Committee intends to make sure that the resources provided to it are used in a cost-effective manner.

“Allow me to highlight a few points, in particular new points, in the draft resolutions. In draft resolution A/69/L.21, which would renew the mandate of the Committee, the General Assembly would call on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to submit a report to it on the economic costs of the occupation, following the recommendations of one of the Committee’s seminars on assistance to the Palestinian people. We believe that that would significantly help to strengthen the information available on that very important aspect of the question of Palestine.

“In draft resolution A/69/L.22, the General Assembly would renew the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and request the Secretary-General to provide the Division with the resources necessary to ensure the implementation of all prescribed activities.

“In draft resolution A/69/L.23, on the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly would renew the mandate of the Department of Public Information and ask it to pursue initiatives that contribute to creating a climate conducive to dialogue and peace efforts.

“In draft resolution A/69/L.24, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”, the General Assembly would reaffirm its position on the essential elements of such a settlement and refer to developments during the past year. It would express its deep concern at the situation on the ground, especially the disastrous humanitarian situation in Gaza following the violence this past summer, as well as the rising tensions in the West Bank, especially in occupied East Jerusalem.

“In that draft resolution, the Assembly would also call for the resumption of negotiations, with the support of the international community, on all issues relating to permanent status. The draft stresses the need for the international community to renew and intensify its efforts in that regard and urges all States and intergovernmental organizations to pursue policies that ensure compliance with their obligations under international law, in particular with respect to settlements. I hope that those and the other provisions of the text will garner the Assembly’s strong support.

“The four draft resolutions that I have just presented outline positions, mandates and programmes that are of paramount importance to the Organization with regard to its ongoing responsibility regarding the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. Our Committee continues to be fully committed to the cause of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, based on the resolutions of the Assembly and the Security Council, in accordance with international law.”

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Christopher Grima of Malta, Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights

of the Palestinian People, to introduce the report of the Committee.

Mr. Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to present to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee (A/69/35). Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

After the introduction of the report, Chapters II and III outline the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and the organization of the Committee's work during the year.

Under Chapter IV, the report reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee and contains a detailed factual account of developments that have taken place in the period under review, which ended on 6 October 2014. The most recent events will be reflected in the next report.

Chapter V describes the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman's participation in General Assembly and Security Council debates, statements issued by the Committee and its Bureau, and the continued dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations. This chapter also provides information about the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Chapter VI provides an overview of the work done over the year by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 68/14 of 26 November 2013.

The last chapter of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee. Following the war this summer in Gaza, the Committee welcomes in this chapter the establishment of a commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council as an important step towards establishing accountability for violations of humanitarian and human rights law. The Committee also welcomes the request by the Palestinian leadership addressed to the Secretary-General that the territory of the State of Palestine be placed under an international protection system by the United Nations. The Committee also calls on the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly to take practical steps to follow up on the findings of previous fact-finding missions.

Also in this chapter, the Committee calls on all States Members of the United Nations to support the administration of Gaza by the Palestinian National Consensus Government under the leadership of President Abbas, which should provide a window of opportunity to stabilize Gaza. The Committee calls for the full opening of the Gaza crossings for the legitimate and sustained flow of persons and goods in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, as normalization in Gaza would significantly reduce tensions and facilitate the resumption of the political process.

Noting the limitations of the traditional format of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian final-status talks facilitated by a single Member State, the Committee calls for proposals with innovative approaches and formats that could help break the deadlock and accelerate the end of the 47-year-long Israeli military occupation and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Committee urges the Security Council and the General Assembly to give positive consideration to all such proposals.

The Committee welcomes the accession by the State of Palestine to a number of international conventions and treaties and encourages the signature of further international instruments, which would allow it, *inter alia*, to pursue justice and accountability for Palestinian victims through the available international legal mechanisms.

Convinced that sustainable development of the Palestinian economy cannot take root under the existing regime of Israeli occupation, which exacts an annual cost of an estimated \$7 billion from the Palestinian economy, the Committee calls on the General Assembly to establish provisions for a mechanism that would allow the United Nations to document the costs resulting from the occupation.

The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2015 on the following topics: promoting accountability for Israeli violations and the needed protection for the Palestinian people; mobilizing increased international scrutiny of the developments on the ground, in particular settlement activities; promoting action by the international community to put an end to all illegal Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian

territory, including East Jerusalem; examining the legal ramifications of the new international status of the State of Palestine; and, finally, calling attention to the plight of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails.

The Committee will also continue to encourage civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the Committee and the United Nations as a whole. The Committee encourages the Members and observer delegations to mobilize their respective civil societies at the national level, in particular young people, and to establish solidarity committees with the State of Palestine.

Finally, the Committee reiterates its view that the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of relevant issues and requests the continuation of the programme and the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

In closing, I would like to express the hope that the report that I have just presented will be of assistance to the General Assembly in its deliberations on the question of Palestine.

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

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): It is my honour to address the General Assembly, on behalf of the State of Palestine, at this important debate. On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I reaffirm the gratitude of the Palestinian people and Government for the compelling expressions of solidarity and support received from all around the world.

We also express appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, Ambassador Seck of Senegal, for presiding over this morning's special meeting of the Committee and for introducing draft resolutions A/69/L.21, A/69/L.22, A/69/L.23 and A/69/L.24, relating to agenda item 36, "Question of Palestine". We also thank the Committee's Rapporteur, Ambassador Grima of Malta, for presenting the Committee's annual report (A/69/35), and the other Bureau members — Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia and Nicaragua — and all the members and observers of

the Committee for their principled, strong support for the just cause of Palestine.

We also commend the work of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the Department of Public Information Special information programme on the question of Palestine over the past year.

I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" (A/69/371). I renew our appreciation for the support of the United Nations system, consistent with its abiding responsibility until the question of Palestine is resolved in all its aspects, including the efforts of Mr. Robert Serry — Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority — and the tireless efforts of all United Nations agencies in providing vital assistance to the Palestinian people. These include the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization, UN-Women, Habitat and the United Nations Population Fund, along and other international organizations and partners.

The decades-long political, humanitarian, financial and moral support of the international community has helped to sustain the Palestinian people, including the more than 5 million Palestine refugees, in the absence of their ability to enjoy their inalienable rights. We are grateful for the support, while again calling for every possible effort, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, relevant resolutions and international law, to redress the injustice that our people have endured for far too long.

A year ago, despite the many challenges and harsh realities faced by the Palestinian people, we came before the General Assembly with great hope. We were in the midst of yet another round of resumed peace negotiations, under the auspices of the United States of America, with the Palestinian and Israeli representatives convened in direct negotiations as a result of the tireless efforts of Secretary of State John Kerry and the support of the League of Arab States' Follow-up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet and concerned States from every corner of the globe.

Despite more than 20 years of negotiations and the fact that the situation is worsening on every front, the Palestinian leadership agreed to again engage in the peace process, in good faith, reaffirming its commitment to a non-violent, political approach to achieve our rights and peace. All were in unison as to the goals: to achieve a comprehensive solution to the conflict by bringing the parties together to justly resolve all core final-status issues — the questions of the Palestine refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security, water and prisoners — and to actualize the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with a complete end to the Israeli military occupation that began in 1967 and the fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination in their independent, contiguous, sovereign and democratic State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, thus beginning a new chapter of peace, coexistence and security between the State of Palestine and the State of Israel.

Despite the passage of time and the illegitimate attempts of Israel, the occupying Power, to create facts on the ground and repeatedly impose new conditions on the peace process, the international consensus remained firmly in support of the two-State solution, based on the parameters enshrined decades ago in United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

Among the resounding messages was the fact that only a small opportunity remained to realize the two-State solution and that it must be seized before it diminishes beyond the realm of viability and possibility. Palestinian-Israeli peace would be of immeasurable benefit not only to the two peoples, but also to the region and the entire international community, which for too long have been burdened by the conflict and its ever present threat to global peace and security.

It was also in that spirit that the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2014 to be the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and reiterated its call on all States, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to exert their greatest efforts in support of the Palestinian people and the realization of their rights. Hopes rose that the necessary momentum and political will would be mobilized to finally fulfil the right of the Palestinian people to live as a free people in their homeland and the right of Palestine to take its rightful place among the

community of nations, thus launching a new era in the Middle East.

Yet that hope has faded in a year that has witnessed, instead, the collapse of the peace process and a dramatic deterioration of conditions, owing to Israel's illegal and destructive actions, reckless provocations and incitement, flagrant intransigence and bad faith in negotiations, which have brought the conflict to a precipice, making a peaceful settlement more elusive than ever.

The current situation in occupied Palestine is perilous. In the wake of Israel's war against the Gaza Strip — the third war in six years against that besieged part of our homeland — and owing to the intensification of Israel's illegal colonization campaign in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and Israel's relentless repression, provocation and collective punishment of the Palestinian people, tensions have risen to extreme levels. Violence has escalated, leading to a highly incendiary situation that threatens to explode. The urgency of international action to avert complete destabilization and the consequences of such an outcome and to salvage the prospects for peace cannot be overstated.

In Gaza, the 1.8 million Palestinians — children, women and men, the majority of whom are refugees — remain imprisoned and isolated under the illegal Israeli blockade, now in its eighth year, which has debilitated the economy and caused widespread poverty and unemployment, food insecurity, health problems and other social ills. The Palestinian civilian population there also continues to endure untold suffering due to the devastation and humanitarian disaster deliberately inflicted by the Israeli military aggression of July and August. The shocking human and physical toll of that criminal Israeli attack is by now well known. However, we must recall these facts, for the carnage and destruction continue to impact every aspect of life in Gaza, and the deep wounds, trauma and grief of our people remain unhealed.

The Israeli occupying forces killed more than 2,180 Palestinians, the vast majority of them civilians, including 516 children and 283 women. They injured more than 11,000 people, among them 3,000 children, causing permanent disabilities to thousands of civilians. Children were killed on beaches as they played, in the sanctity of their homes, in UNRWA schools, in

playgrounds and in the arms of their parents, who could not save them from the Israeli onslaught.

About 1,500 children have been orphaned, as mothers and fathers were not spared, including by Israeli bombings that flattened homes atop entire families. That occurred in Al-Shujaiyeh, Khuzza'a and Rafah, among other areas where Israel pursued a scorched-earth policy, destroying homes and massacring civilians with a vengeance, laying waste to entire communities and terrorizing the whole population. The trauma inflicted has been widely reported, with nearly 400,000 children in psychological distress and in need of support, as assessed by UNICEF.

More than half a million people were displaced while the Israeli aggression raged in Gaza — the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1967. Fearful families fled their homes in search of safety, including under the United Nations flag, with 290,000 people sheltering in UNRWA schools at the height of the conflict. But nowhere in Gaza was safe. UNRWA schools were repeatedly struck in Israeli attacks that killed and injured innocent civilians and destroyed United Nations facilities, in grave breach of international law and in violation of United Nations immunity and the inviolability of its premises.

The destruction inflicted by the occupying Power has been described by the Secretary-General as “mile after mile of wholesale destruction” (*S/PV.7281, p.2*) that reduced many neighborhoods to rubble. As reported by the United Nations, more than 100,000 Palestinian homes were affected, including 20,000 homes either completely destroyed or damaged beyond habitation, rendering 110,000 people homeless. Thousands of metres of water and sanitation infrastructure were severely damaged, exacerbating the water crisis in Gaza and intensifying the risk of disease and its spread. Damage to electricity networks, including the main power plant, continues to impact all sectors of life. Seventy-five hospitals and medical facilities and more than 100 United Nations facilities also sustained damage in Israeli strikes, and at least 500 economic and industrial properties were destroyed, causing extensive loss of livelihoods and furthering the de-development of Gaza. Religious and historical sites were left in ruins. and over 8,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance are impeding rubble removal and reconstruction and endangering lives.

While we await the results of investigations of the Human Rights Council's Independent Commission

of Inquiry, as well as by the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry, there can be no doubt that Israel committed gross human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes during its July and August military aggression in Gaza. We reiterate the need for accountability for all those Israeli crimes. Accountability is essential for ensuring justice for the victims, and justice, in turn, is fundamental if genuine healing and reconciliation between the two peoples are ever to be achieved.

We condemn Israel's refusal to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry and its constant obstruction of international efforts to establish the facts and to achieve accountability. In that regard, we believe that efforts to uphold international law, including by convening the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to determine measures to enforce that Convention in occupied Palestine, would help both to avert such aggressions in the future and to promote accountability for what has already occurred.

In the meantime, the situation in Gaza remains dire. Consolidation of the fragile ceasefire continues to be thwarted by Israel's refusal to resume talks. Moreover, despite the convening of the Cairo International Conference on Palestine, “Reconstructing Gaza”; despite the generous pledges of international support and the efforts of the Palestinian National Consensus Government; and despite the tripartite agreement brokered by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Israel continues to hamper reconstruction, and the delays in recovery are exacerbating the misery of our people, whose anger at their plight is deepening as the shock of the aggression lifts and their plight remains unaddressed.

We urge the international community to demand that Israel, the occupying Power, fully lift its inhumane blockade and allow the expeditious entry of construction materials to rebuild Gaza, as well as unimpeded humanitarian access to alleviate the disaster deliberately inflicted on Gaza. Those demands are obligations incumbent upon the occupying Power under international humanitarian law. Continued violations and delays risk grave consequences, including greater instability and desperation among the population.

The situation in the rest of occupied Palestine, including in occupied East Jerusalem, remains critical as well. Israel's violations and crimes have escalated, including settlement activities, military raids, the

killing and injury of Palestinian civilians, the arrest of Palestinians, provocations, and incitement and hateful rhetoric by religious extremists and Government officials, along with terror rampages by Israeli settlers. Tensions are at a fever pitch, and the situation continues to deteriorate.

While we are mindful of the urgency of making peace, including in the context of the turmoil wracking the region, and are engaging with the international community to break the deadlock and end this nearly half-century of military occupation, Israel is instead expanding and entrenching its illegitimate control over our territory and ruthlessly subjugating our people, destroying the two-State solution, stoking a new cycle of deadly violence and dragging us farther away from the goal of peace.

Jerusalem — a city holy to the three monotheistic religions and the key to peace — is at this moment a painful reflection of the occupation's entrenchment and Israel's blatant rejection of peace. Israel's unlawful attempts to change the demography, character, identity and status of occupied Jerusalem, and its provocations and incitement, particularly vis-à-vis the Haram al-Sharif, are inflaming that volatile situation and aggravating religious sensitivities, instigating a dangerous religious conflict that must be averted. Repeated incursions by settlers, extremists and occupying forces at the Haram al-Sharif, as well as ongoing excavations and tunneling, threaten the integrity, foundations and sanctity of holy sites. Stringent restrictions on access to the city, affecting both Palestinian Muslims and Christians, severely impede freedom of worship and movement, while Palestinian institutions in the city continue to be closed.

Here, we reiterate that Al-Quds is the heart of Palestine. It has been the religious, political, social, economic and cultural center of the Palestinian people for centuries and will remain so. As enshrined in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the international consensus on the status of Jerusalem is firm, including the non-recognition of Israeli claims to sovereignty over East Jerusalem and agreement that East Jerusalem is occupied territory and remains an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. All Israeli measures aimed at altering the city's status — including the extension of the Basic Law and attempts to change the status quo at the holy sites — are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith.

The international consensus on the illegality of Israel's settlements in Palestine is also firm. Yet Israel persists with its colonization campaign in contempt of United Nations resolutions and international law and of the demands for a complete cessation of all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem. The Israeli Government has even gone so far as to deride the international community with claims that there is no occupation and that they will never stop building on our land.

In grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, plans for the construction of thousands of settlement units have been declared and advanced by the occupying Power in the past year, and thousands of acres of additional Palestinian land have been seized. Every day we witness the construction of Israeli settlements and the apartheid wall, the expropriation of Palestinian land under varying schemes and military orders, the seizure and savage demolition of homes, including by extremist settlers, and flagrant acts of colonization, as well as reprisals against Palestinian civilians. All those illegal actions undermine the territorial contiguity and integrity of our State and the viability of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, taking us closer and closer to a one-State reality, with everything that that implies.

Such actions also continue to cause the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, constituting yet another grave breach. The occupying Power is now threatening thousands of refugee Bedouins in Palestine with a massive forced transfer from their homes, communities and pastoral way of life, all to facilitate its unlawful annexation aims. The stability, security and presence of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem are also in constant jeopardy. Palestinians continue to face demolition of their homes and revocation of their residency rights, in addition to raging acts of violence, discrimination and virulent racism against them by Israeli extremists, who persist in attacks against Palestinians, including killing, assaults and kidnapping attempts on children, as well as attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites, which have seriously destabilized the city.

Israel also continues its daily military raids, violently attacking, killing and injuring Palestinian civilians, and ransacking and destroying Palestinian homes and properties. Severe restrictions on movement continue, in collective punishment of the entire population, and the occupying forces continue to

protect and support extremist settlers, who commit acts of violence and terror with impunity against Palestinian civilians. Those raids have also entailed Israel's repression of any opposition to the occupation and the continued arrest and detention of Palestinians, bringing the total number of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel to more than 6,000 people, including children as young as 12 years old, women, men and parliamentarians, who are enduring horrific abuse that includes cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as torture, unsanitary conditions in captivity and other violations of their most basic human rights.

We condemn all such illegal Israeli actions and call on the international community to firmly condemn such violations and demand their immediate end. The situation, as all have recognized, is totally unsustainable. If left without remedy, it will not remain stable but will spiral out of control, with grave consequences. Responsible international action is urgently needed to address the long-festering conflict and bring the parties back from the precipice.

The crisis that the Palestinian people face has reached existential proportions. Under the occupation and in the diaspora — where regional instability, especially the conflict in Syria and its spillover into Lebanon and Jordan, has severely impacted the Palestinian refugee community — our people are suffering immense and growing hardships, all stemming from the grave injustice done to them in Al-Nakba of 1948 and thereafter. Their repeated displacement and dispossession, generation after generation, and the continued denial of their inalienable rights represent an injustice that brings pain not only to our people and the Middle East region, but to the international community as a whole, for which this conflict remains a source of shame and a threat to global peace and security.

The international community, above all the Security Council, must uphold its established positions and must send a clear message to Israel, the occupying Power, that it will no longer tolerate the obstruction of a peaceful settlement. The parameters of a solution have long been known and supported by the international community, based on international law and the principles of justice. The Security Council must implement its resolutions and fulfill its responsibilities to contribute to bringing an end to that illegal situation by recognizing its broad and dangerous political, religious and security dimensions. That includes responsible and timely action on the initiative we have brought before the Security Council

for setting a time frame to end the occupation and to achieve a comprehensive and just solution to all core issues that fulfils the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including to independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and one that ensures a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question on the basis of resolution 194 (III).

Defusing the situation and creating a credible political future must be a priority. Israel must be compelled to comply with the law, commit to the path of peace and negotiate in good faith. Negotiations will never succeed without that. If Israel remains intransigent, it must be held accountable, and alternative political, legal and non-violent methods must immediately be considered in order to ensure Israel's compliance and to provide protection to the Palestinian people for as long as the belligerent occupation persists. It is clear that past methods and efforts have failed to uphold the law and human rights or to secure the peace and justice that we have long sought.

The value of hope for human perseverance cannot be quantified. At the same time, the consequences of the loss of hope are unimaginable. We appeal to the international community not to let the Palestinian people lose hope. As the late President Yasser Arafat stated before the Assembly 40 years ago this month, "Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand" (*A/PV.2282, para. 82*).

For decades, our people have been sustained by a deep faith in international law and the international community's pledges to achieve a just resolution of their plight. We thus reiterate our appeals to the international community today. We are committed to peace, as affirmed by President Abbas from this rostrum, and to the programme of the Palestinian National Consensus Government. We call on the General Assembly, the Security Council and all Member States to rise to their responsibilities and commitments and to help us stop the bloodshed and suffering.

After nearly seven decades, it is time to finally bring an end to this tragic conflict and to allow the Palestinian people to know justice, peace, security, human dignity, and, finally, freedom, like all other peoples on this planet.

Mr. Prossor (Israel): I stand before the world as a proud representative of the State of Israel and the Jewish

people. I stand tall before this Assembly, knowing that truth and morality are on my side. And yet, I stand here knowing that today in the Assembly, truth will be turned on its head and morality cast aside. The fact of the matter is that when members of the international community speak about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a fog descends that clouds all logic and moral clarity. The result is not *realpolitik* — it is “*surrealpolitik*”.

The world’s unrelenting focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an injustice to tens of millions of victims of tyranny and terrorism in the Middle East. As we speak, Yazidis, Bahais, Kurds, Christians and Muslims are being executed and expelled by radical extremists at a rate of 1,000 people per month. How many resolutions did the Assembly adopt last week to address that crisis? And how many special sessions were called for? The answer is zero. What does that say about international concern for human life? Not much, but it speaks volumes about the hypocrisy of the international community.

I stand before the Assembly to speak the truth. Of the 300 million Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa, less than one half of 1 per cent are truly free — and they are all citizens of Israel. Israeli Arabs are some of the most educated Arabs in the world. They are our leading physicians and surgeons, they are elected to our parliament and they serve as judges on our Supreme Court. Millions of men and women in the Middle East would welcome such opportunities and freedoms. Nonetheless, nation after nation will stand at this rostrum today and criticize Israel — the small island of democracy in a region plagued by tyranny and oppression.

Our conflict has never been about the establishment of a Palestinian State. It has always been about the existence of the Jewish State. Sixty-seven years ago this week, on 29 November 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the land into a Jewish State and an Arab State. The Jews said yes; the Arabs said no. But they did not just say no. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon launched a war of annihilation against our newborn State. That is the historical truth that the Arabs are trying to distort. The Arabs’ historical mistakes continue to be felt — in lives lost in war, lives lost to terrorism and lives scarred by the Arabs’ narrow political interests.

According to the United Nations, about 700,000 Palestinians were displaced in that war, which was initiated by the Arabs themselves. At the same time,

some 850,000 Jews were forced to flee from Arab countries. Why is it that 67 years later, the displacement of the Jews has been completely forgotten by this institution, while the displacement of Palestinians is the subject of an annual debate? The difference is that Israel did its utmost to integrate the Jewish refugees into society. The Arabs did just the opposite. The worst oppression of the Palestinian people takes place in Arab nations. In most of the Arab world, Palestinians are denied citizenship and are aggressively discriminated against. They are barred from owning land and prevented from entering certain professions. And yet none — not one — of those crimes are mentioned in the draft resolutions now before Assembly members.

If the Assembly was truly concerned about the plight of the Palestinian people, there would be one, just one, draft resolution to address the thousands of Palestinians killed in Syria. And if it were truly concerned about the Palestinians, there would be at least one draft resolution to denounce the treatment of Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps. But there is not. The reason for that is that today’s debate is not about speaking for peace or speaking for the Palestinian people — it is about speaking against Israel. It is nothing but a hate campaign and an Israel-bashing festival.

The European nations claim to stand for *liberté, égalité et fraternité* — freedom, equality and brotherhood — but nothing could be farther from the truth. I often hear European leaders proclaim that Israel has the right to exist in secure borders. That is very nice, but I have to say that it makes about as much sense as for me to stand here and proclaim Sweden’s right to exist in secure borders. When it comes to matters of security, Israel has learned the hard way that we cannot rely on others — certainly not on Europe.

In 1973, on Yom Kippur — the holiest day on the Jewish calendar — the surrounding Arab nations launched an attack against Israel. In the hours before the war began, Golda Meir, our then Prime Minister, made the difficult decision not to launch a pre-emptive strike. The Israeli Government understood that if we launched a pre-emptive strike, we would lose the support of the international community. As the Arab armies advanced on every front, the situation in Israel grew dire. Our casualty count was growing, and we were running dangerously low on weapons and ammunition. In that hour of need, United States President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger agreed to send Galaxy transport aircraft loaded with tanks and

ammunition to resupply our troops. The only problem was that the Galaxy planes needed to refuel en route to Israel.

The Arab States were closing in, and our very existence was threatened — and yet Europe was not even willing to let the planes refuel. The United States stepped in once again and negotiated that the planes be allowed to refuel in the Azores. The Government and people of Israel will never forget that, when our very existence was at stake, only one country came to our aid — the United States of America. Israel is tired of hollow promises from European leaders. The Jewish people have a long memory. We will never ever forget that Europe failed us in the 1940s. It failed us in 1973. And Europe is failing us again today.

Every European parliament that has voted to prematurely and unilaterally recognize a Palestinian State is giving the Palestinians exactly what they want — statehood without peace. By handing them statehood without peace, they would be rewarding unilateral actions and taking away any incentive for the Palestinians to negotiate or compromise or renounce violence. They would be sending the message that the Palestinian Authority can sit as a Government with terrorists and incite violence against Israel without paying any price.

European nations are hardening the Palestinians' position and giving them exactly what they want — statehood without peace. The first European Union member to officially recognize a Palestinian State was Sweden. One has to wonder why the Swedish Government was so anxious to take that step. When it comes to other conflicts in our region, the Swedish Government calls for direct negotiations between the parties, but for the Palestinians — surprise, surprise — they roll out the red carpet. Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Söder may think that she is there to celebrate her Government's so-called historic recognition, when in reality it is nothing more than an historic mistake. The Swedish Government may host the Nobel Prize ceremony, but there is nothing noble about its cynical political campaign to appease the Arabs in order to get a seat on the Security Council. Nations on the Security Council should have sense, sensitivity and sensibility. Well, the Swedish Government has shown no sense, no sensitivity and no sensibility — just nonsense.

Israel learned the hard way that listening to the international community can bring about devastating

consequences. In 2005, we unilaterally dismantled every settlement and removed every citizen from the Gaza Strip. Did this bring us any closer to peace? Not at all. It paved the way for Iran to send its terrorist proxies to establish a terror stronghold on our doorstep. I can assure the Assembly that we will not make the same mistake again. When it comes to our security, we cannot and will not rely on others; Israel must be able to defend itself by itself.

The State of Israel is the land of our forefathers. It is the land of the forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is the land where Moses led the Jewish people, where David built his palace, where Solomon built the Jewish Temple and where Isaiah saw a vision of eternal peace. For thousands of years, Jews have lived continuously in the land of Israel. We endured through the rise and fall of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman empires. We endured through thousands of years of persecution, expulsions and crusades. The bond between the Jewish people and the Jewish land is unbreakable. Nothing can change one simple truth — Israel is our home and Jerusalem is our eternal capital.

At the same time, we recognize that Jerusalem has special meaning for other faiths. Under Israeli sovereignty, all people — I repeat that all people, regardless of religion and nationality — can visit the city's holy sites. We intend to keep it that way. The only ones trying to change the status quo on the Temple Mount are Palestinian leaders. President Abbas is telling his people that Jews are contaminating the Temple Mount. He has called for days of rage and has urged Palestinians to prevent Jews from visiting the Temple Mount using "all means necessary". Those words are as irresponsible as they are unacceptable. One does not have to be Catholic to visit the Vatican, one does not have to be Jewish to visit the Western Wall, but some Palestinians would like to see the day when only Muslims can visit the Temple Mount. The international community is lending a hand to extremists and fanatics. Those who preach tolerance and religious freedom should be ashamed. Israel will never let that kind of exclusion happen. We will make sure that the holy places remain open to all people of all faiths for all time.

No one wants peace more than Israel. No one needs to explain the importance of peace to parents who have sent their child to defend our homeland. No one knows the stakes of success or failure better than we Israelis do. The people of Israel have shed too many

tears and buried too many sons and daughters. We are ready for peace, but we are not naïve. Israel's security is paramount. Only a strong and secure Israel can achieve a comprehensive peace.

The past month should make it clear to anyone that Israel has immediate and pressing security needs. In recent weeks, Palestinian terrorists have shot and stabbed our citizens and twice driven their cars into crowds of pedestrians. Just a few days ago, terrorists armed with axes and a gun savagely attacked Jewish worshippers during morning prayers. We have reached the point when Israelis cannot even find sanctuary from terrorism in the sanctuary of a synagogue. Such attacks did not emerge out of a vacuum. They are the results of years of indoctrination and incitement. A Jewish proverb teaches us that the instruments of both death and life are in the power of the tongue.

As a Jew and as an Israeli, I know with utter certainty that when our enemies say they want to attack us, they really mean it. Hamas's genocidal charter calls for the destruction of Israel and the murders of Jews worldwide. For years, Hamas and other terrorist groups have sent suicide bombers into our cities, launched rockets into our towns and sent terrorists to kidnap and murder our citizens. And what about the Palestinian Authority? It is leading a systemic campaign of incitement. In schools, children are being taught that Palestine will stretch from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. In mosques, religious leaders are spreading vicious libel accusing Jews of destroying Muslim holy sites. In sports stadiums, we see teams that are named after terrorists. In newspapers, cartoons urge Palestinians to commit terror attacks against Israelis. Children in most parts of the world grow up watching cartoons of Mickey Mouse singing and dancing. Palestinian children also grow up watching Mickey Mouse, but on Palestinian national television, a twisted figure dressed as Mickey Mouse dances wearing an explosive belt and chants "Death to America and death to the Jews".

I challenge representatives to stand up in the Hall today and do something constructive for a change — publicly denounce the violence, denounce the incitement and denounce the culture of hate. Most people believe that at its core, the conflict is a battle between Jews and Arabs, between Israelis and Palestinians. They are wrong. The battle that we are witnessing is a battle between those who sanctify life and those who celebrate death. Following the savage attack in a Jerusalem synagogue, celebrations

erupted in Palestinian towns and villages. People were dancing in the street and distributing candy. Young men posed with axes, loudspeakers at mosques called out congratulations, and the terrorists were hailed as martyrs and heroes. That was not the first time that we saw the Palestinians celebrate the murder of innocent civilians. We saw them rejoice after every terrorist attack on Israeli civilians, and they even took to the streets to celebrate the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center right here in New York City. Imagine the type of State that such a society would produce. Does the Middle East really need another "terror-ocracy"? Some members of the international community are aiding and abetting its creation.

This morning, as we came into the United Nations, we passed the flags of all 193 Member States. If we take the time to count, we will discover that there are 15 flags with a crescent, 25 flags with a cross and then there is one flag, one flag only, with the Jewish Star of David. Amid all the nations of the world, there is one State, just one small State, a nation State for the Jewish people. For some people, that is one too many. As I stand before the Assembly today, I am reminded of all the years when Jewish people paid for the world's ignorance and indifference in blood. Those days are no more. We will never apologize for being a free and independent people in our sovereign State. We will never apologize for defending ourselves.

To the nations that continue to allow prejudice to prevail over truth, I say, "*J'accuse*". I accuse them of hypocrisy, duplicity and of lending legitimacy to those who seek to destroy our State. I accuse them of speaking about Israel's right of self-defence in theory, while denying it in practice. And I accuse them of demanding concessions from Israel, while asking nothing of the Palestinians. In the face of such offences, the verdict is clear. They are not for peace or for the Palestinian people. They are simply against Israel.

Members of the international community have a choice to make. They can recognize Israel as the nation State of the Jewish people, or permit the Palestinian leadership to deny our history without consequence. They can publicly proclaim that the claim of return is a non-starter, or they can allow that claim to remain the major obstacle to any peace agreement. They can work to end Palestinian incitement, or stand by as hatred and extremism take root for generations to come. They can prematurely recognize a Palestinian State, or encourage the Palestinian Authority to break its pact with Hamas

and return to direct negotiations. The choice is theirs. They can continue to steer the Palestinians off course, or pave the way to real and lasting peace.

Mr. Alyas (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to speak on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to you, Sir, for your wise leadership of the work of the General Assembly. In addition, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his briefing and to the Rapporteur of the Committee for introducing the report (A/69/35).

I am honoured to speak to members of the Assembly today on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a crucial day when the international community reaffirms its commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people and its determination to put an end to the Israeli occupation, which has perpetrated a great injustice against the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under occupation.

Almost two years ago, this body recognized the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the United Nations by adopting its resolution 67/19. That resolution and the overwhelming support it received was an important step towards righting a historic wrong. It was an important step in showing Israel that the status quo that it is working hard to cement is unacceptable to the international community. Last year, the international community as a whole rallied behind the negotiation process to put an end to the Israeli occupation and achieve a lasting peace based on the two-State solution.

That overwhelming support and effort could have ended the great injustice against the Palestinian people, which has been going on for decades, had it not been for Israel's intransigence. The negotiations ended before they even started as a result of Israel's absolute refusal not only to compromise, but to do what it is obliged to do according to international law, such as stopping settlement activity; dismantling settlements; tearing down the wall of apartheid; ending the blockade of Gaza; putting an end to the use of excessive and lethal force against the unarmed civilian population; ending the policies of forced evictions, the forcible transfer of civilians, the demolition of homes and the confiscation of property; releasing detainees held without charge and prosecuting extremist terrorist Israeli settlers.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation holds Israel responsible for all those violations of international law and calls on the international community to hold Israel accountable and make it cease such illegal and unjust acts and policies. We also hold Israel responsible for the escalation in the city of Al-Quds — Jerusalem — resulting from the latest, unprecedented measures against the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, which involved the crime of closing the mosque, denying worshippers access to pray in it and the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by occupation soldiers and settlers.

Another development that is a cause for concern is the draft law issued recently by the Israeli Cabinet that declares Israel to be a Jewish nation. That is discrimination against the non-Jewish residents and citizens of Israel, and will lead to two classes of citizens: first-class citizens, who are Jews, and second-class citizens, who are non-Jews. The world cannot stand by idly while Israel practices more discrimination within its legal system enforced in the lands it controls.

The time has come to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. We call on the international community to support the efforts in the Security Council to establish a timeline to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and Arab lands, withdraw to the borders of 4 June 1967, make progress towards implementing the two-State solution and grant independence to the Palestinian people. The international community as a whole recognizes the importance of the principle of self-determination. Now is the time to put it into effect.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan) took the Chair.

It is strange that the representative of Israel should speak on issues that are unrelated to the agenda item that we are considering today. However, that should surprise no one because Israel turns realities upside down every day in an attempt to convince the international community of something other than the truth. It is strange that the representative of Israel should attack Sweden for its brave stance instead of urging its own Government to respect international commitments and international law. It is also strange that the representative of Israel should take pride in what he calls democracy, freedom and justice, based on depriving others of their rights and their land before Israel came into existence.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union has fully supported United States-led peace efforts and underlines that those efforts must not go to waste. We are convinced that the regional context and the situation in Gaza make a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more necessary than ever. We urge the parties to resume meaningful negotiations to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement based on a two-State solution. The only way to resolve the conflict is through an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967, ends all claims and fulfils the aspirations of both parties. A one-State reality would not be compatible with those aspirations.

The European Union recalls that a lasting solution to the conflict must be achieved on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. We believe that clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. The European Union has set out and will continue to actively promote its position with regard to the parameters in the European Council conclusions of December 2009 and December 2010, and as expressed by the European Union in the Security Council on 21 April 2011 (see S/PV.6520). On that basis, the European Union is willing to work with the United States and other partners on an initiative to relaunch the peace negotiations, based on the following parameters.

There should be an agreement on the borders of the two States, based on the 4 June 1967 lines, with equivalent land swaps as may be agreed between the parties. The European Union will recognize changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, only when agreed by the parties. There should be security arrangements that, for Palestinians, respect their sovereignty and show that the occupation is over, and, for Israelis, protect their security, prevent the resurgence of terrorism and deal effectively with

security threats, including new and vital threats in the region. There should be a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee question. The aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem should be fulfilled. A way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of both States.

The preservation of the viability of the two-State solution must remain a priority. The developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-State solution increasingly unattainable. Reaffirming its commitment to implementing the European Council conclusions of May and December 2012, as well as the applicability of international human-rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, the European Union calls on Israel to halt continued settlement expansion, which severely threatens the two-State solution, and to put an end to settler violence, to the worsening of living conditions for Palestinians in Area C, to demolitions — including of projects funded by the European Union — to evictions and to forced transfers. A fundamental change of policy on those negative developments is necessary to prevent the irreversible loss of the two-State solution.

The European Union is also gravely concerned at the growing tension and increasing violence on the ground. We condemn all recent terrorist attacks and express our condolences for the loss of life. We urge all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement, provocation, the excessive use of force or retaliation. The European Union calls on political leaders from all sides to work together through visible actions to de-escalate the situation. In that regard, we are particularly concerned at worrying developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. We appeal for full respect of the holy sites. Any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. The European Union fully acknowledges the role of Jordan as custodian to the Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem and welcomes the tripartite meeting in Amman on 13 November between King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, Secretary of State John Kerry and Prime Minister Netanyahu, where concrete steps towards a calming down of the situation were agreed upon. We look forward to a swift and effective implementation of such measures.

Actions that call into question stated commitments to a negotiated solution must be avoided. The European Union deeply deplores and strongly opposes the

recent expropriation of land near Bethlehem, the recent announcements of plans for new settlement construction, in particular in Givat Hamatos, Ramat Shlomo, Har Homa and Ramot, as well as the plans to displace Bedouins in the West Bank and the continued demolitions, including projects funded by European Union member States. We urge Israel to reverse those decisions, which run counter to international law and directly threaten the two-State solution. Recent settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States. Recalling that settlements are illegal under international law, the European Union and its member States remain committed to ensuring continued, full and effective implementation of existing European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. We closely monitor the situation and its broader implications and remain ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two-State solution.

The European Union underlines its concern at the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, which still need to be adequately addressed by urgently restoring basic infrastructures and services. We welcome the international community's pledges towards the reconstruction of Gaza. In light of the urgent needs of the people in Gaza, all these pledges should be swiftly honoured. The European Union urges the parties to fully implement the temporary mechanism for monitoring and verifying reconstruction materials negotiated by the United Nations, Israel and the Palestinian Authority as an important step towards the necessary urgent opening of all crossing points. While taking positive note of the recent one-off transfers of agricultural products and fish from Gaza to the West Bank, the European Union stresses the importance of a change in the Israeli policy so as to allow Gaza to trade normally and on a permanent basis.

The European Union calls for a fundamental change in the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure. The parties should urgently make progress towards a durable ceasefire, based on their agreement in Cairo on 26 August, to reach an agreement that ends the Gaza closure and addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns. A return to the status quo prior to the latest conflict is not an option. The European Union stands ready to play a key role in international efforts to support a durable ceasefire, including through the rapid reactivation and possible extension in scope and

mandate of its European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah and the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories. We urge all the relevant parties to create the conditions needed to allow it to play such a role.

The European Union supports the efforts of the Palestinian national consensus Government and President Abbas and strongly encourages the Palestinian Authority to progressively assume its Government functions in the Gaza Strip, including in the fields of security, civil administration and the monitoring of the Gaza crossing points. We welcome the convening of the first cabinet meeting in Gaza as a positive step and urge all Palestinian factions to end their internal divisions. We are concerned by the recent bomb attacks against leading Fatah figures in Gaza.

The unsustainable situation in Gaza, the recent increase of violence in Jerusalem and the deteriorating regional context underline the need for a comprehensive peace that would end all claims and fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood. We welcome Secretary of State Kerry's renewed efforts to help the parties return to the table and call on the parties and all major stakeholders, including the Quartet, the League of Arab States and the Security Council, to take the necessary steps to that end. In that regard, the European Union reaffirms its strategic interest in seeing an end to the conflict and is willing to play a major role and actively contribute to a negotiated solution to all final-status issues.

The European Union will do all it can to support the achievement of a lasting and just solution to the conflict. I want to insist on that point, in light of some of the remarks that were made earlier in this discussion. In that regard, the European Union reiterates its offer to both parties of a package of European political, economic and security support and of a special privileged partnership with the European Union in the event of a final peace agreement. The European Union is convinced that such support and partnership, by anchoring both the State of Israel and a future State of Palestine in an ever closer relationship with Europe, will provide a strategic framework for their stable, secure and prosperous development.

Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman): I have the honour and pleasure to speak today on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman on the issue of Palestine. I would like first to express our appreciation to Mr. Fodé Seck, Permanent

Representative of the Republic of Senegal and Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the Committee's report, contained in document A/69/35. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/69/371 on the situation in the Middle East, and we likewise commend the statement of the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We are gathered today to discuss a tragically long-standing issue that, while remaining complex, has also become increasingly fraught with danger as a result of the recent acts of violence perpetrated by Israel on innocent Palestinians in Gaza. We call on the United Nations, the Security Council and other concerned actors to assume their legal and moral responsibility to uphold international legitimacy and the implementation of the Security Council resolutions related to the issue. We also call on the international community to compel the occupying Power to implement the relevant resolutions, fulfil all its obligations and withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan and the other areas that are still under occupation in southern Lebanon.

The General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. By that action, the international community declared its intention to seek a just peace resulting in freedom and national independence for the Palestinian people. But the occupying Power has adopted another course. It has chosen instead the path of the indiscriminate use of weapons and excessive force, which has brought death to Palestinians in Gaza, most of them the elderly, children and women, as well as the destruction of thousands of homes, civilian infrastructure, commercial properties and United Nations facilities.

Oman welcomes the Secretary-General's recent visit to the Middle East as indicative of his recognition of the need to urgently seek a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly in the light of recent tragic events. We applaud the decision of the Swedish Government to officially recognize the State of Palestine and commend the majority vote in Britain's Parliament in support of the belief that the British Government should recognize the State of Palestine. We are pleased with the Spanish Parliament's decision to urge its Government to encourage the recognition of Palestine as a State. We also take this opportunity to

express our appreciation to the Arab Republic of Egypt and to Norway for organizing a donor conference in Cairo last month, and we call on the participating States to implement the conference's results.

The expanded construction of Israeli settlements and the forcible transfer by the occupying Power of Bedouins and herder communities living in the West Bank to central locations constitute violations of Palestinian human rights and are in breach of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states:

“Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive”.

Oman is equally concerned about the tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories resulting from the Israeli blockade and the intensive inhumane and illegal acts designed to change the demographic composition of the population, as well as the practices of the occupying Power in the Noble Quds and the attacks on the Noble Mosque.

We would like to stress strongly that security and stability cannot be achieved through the use of military force. As our Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, made clear in Oman's statement in the Assembly's general debate at its sixty-ninth session,

“Security and stability cannot be achieved through the use of excessive force and the insistence on inflicting heavy loss of life, injuries and destruction on the largest possible scale. The path to achieving security and stability that underpins economic and social recovery can be realized only through the peaceful partnership of the Palestinians and Israelis. We now believe there is a chance to achieve that objective, following the ceasefire agreement reached between the two sides. We stress the importance of the two sides sticking to the agreement in words and in actions and avoiding any violations under any justification or pretext. In that respect, we call upon Palestinians and Israelis alike to resume negotiations in order to reach a just and comprehensive settlement that would provide peace and security for Israel and that responds to the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights.” (A/69/PV.20, p. 5)

In conclusion, Oman affirms its firm view that it is necessary to return to dialogue and negotiation and calls on the parties concerned in the peace process, the Security Council and the Quartet to play an active role, with a view to reaching a just and comprehensive solution and the desired peace. Israel, the occupying Power, should abide by all legal and international decisions and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, living side by side with Israel, within internationally recognized borders.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union but would like to take the opportunity to make a few additional remarks.

Let me say up front that the Swedish recognition of the State of Palestine aims at making the parties less unequal and improving the prospects for a negotiated final-status agreement. We are taking sides for peace, not for one party, and we join the 134 countries that already recognize the State of Palestine. We do this based on our insight and engagement in seeking a peaceful solution to this conflict with the efforts of Count Bernadotte in the 1940s, our early contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization through Olof Palme, the successful work between Egypt and Sweden to start a dialogue between the United States and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1988, and the experiences of the many Swedes who went to live on kibbutzes in Israel in the 1960s and 1970s and onwards, and based on long-standing relations with Israel and with the Palestinians.

Now the young people in both Palestine and Israel need to see that there are alternatives to violence. Our hope is that the recognition will strengthen constructive and moderate forces on both sides, contribute to an end to the occupation and help to stop the development towards a one-State reality.

These are critical times. The recent vicious cycle of violence — the devastating Gaza war and the recent increase of provocations, violence and terrorist attacks in Jerusalem — is a painful warning sign of this urgency. Sweden condemns the horrific terrorist attack on Jewish worshippers in Jerusalem last week. All actors have to unite to prevent the political conflict from spiralling into violence with religious dimensions. If not, the prospects of reaching a two-State solution that meets the aspirations of both parties will be lost.

The lack of progress fuels new acts of violence in the immediate area, of course, but also in the wider Middle East. There are no acceptable excuses for provocations, terrorist attacks, rockets towards civilians or other violent actions. The Israeli settlement expansion, the demolitions, land confiscation, forcible transfer and resettlements in Palestine are not in accordance with international law and are making a negotiated final status agreement on a sustainable two-State solution not only more difficult, but soon almost impossible.

The conditions in Gaza are unacceptable and unsustainable, and a return to the situation as it was before the war is not an option. Status quo means that the two-State solution is fading away during the rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground, both in Gaza and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The borders of Gaza must be opened for construction material and for all goods and people, and the trade possibilities have to increase. The inhabitants of Gaza need to see immediate improvements in their living conditions so that they do not lose hope about the future and lose faith in the international community.

The time has come for more active involvement on the part of the international community — of us in the European Union, the Security Council, the United States of America, the Arab League and the Quartet. We must assist the parties with clear parameters and with a defined time frame aimed at the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The goal is that Israel and Palestine could live side by side in peace and security within recognized borders. The international community has a responsibility to protect and reassure constructive and moderate actors in Palestine who adhere to non-violence, the recognition of Israel and the recognition of previous agreements. Sweden will certainly contribute to this.

Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On today's occasion, it is high time to turn words into concrete actions on the ground. At this moment, it is important to support President Abbas in strengthening the Palestinian Authority and the consensus Government in the West Bank and in Gaza. Sweden has recently adopted a new five-year development strategy for Palestine totalling \$200 million, an increase of 50 per cent.

This year also marks 65 years since the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established to support millions of Palestinians forced to flee their homes. Sweden will continue to be one of the main supporters of UNRWA, and this year we have contributed approximately \$50 million to the Agency. We are also proud to exercise the chairmanship of its Advisory Commission.

Let me end by saying that we expect both the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships to do their utmost to ensure that both peoples may soon live in prosperity, peace and security. Only with peace can true and full security be obtained.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, exactly two years after the adoption of resolution 67/19 recognizing the State of Palestine, I would like to acknowledge the Swedish decision to recognize the State of Palestine and the recommendations of the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and Spain to their Governments to recognize, in turn, the State of Palestine.

We must stress from the outset that the State of Palestine remains under full occupation and that our collective responsibility, based on the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, is to help it put an end to the occupation so that it may achieve independence and of course be granted full membership in our Organization. We meet today at a time when the ethnic crisis is overwhelming Jerusalem and when peaceful efforts seem stalled, while Israel continues its policy of aggression, in particular by expanding its settlements, in flagrant violation of international legitimacy and the resolutions of our Organization.

The conflict in and over Jerusalem is almost a microcosm of the basis of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The key to a just and comprehensive peace throughout our region lies in its solution. This is not surprising, as within the walls of old Jerusalem lies a history unlike that of any other city. The stories of prophets, apostles, kings, sultans and noblemen and the acts of other human beings intermingle. In Jerusalem, the temporal blends with the spiritual, and it is difficult to separate faith from politics. In Jerusalem, images of the past intersect in the present with the dreams of the future. It is, above all, a city of symbols.

When we say that the conflict in and over Jerusalem is today almost a microcosm of the basis

of the Israeli-Arab conflict, it is because, with regard to Jerusalem, Israel continues its blatant defiance of the resolutions and Charter of the United Nations; the provisions of public international law; the Geneva and The Hague Conventions; and the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council and UNESCO; as well as the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. All reject the acquisition of territories by force; denounce the provocative practices of Israel in Jerusalem since 1967; condemn its actions aimed at changing the status and character of the city, especially its decision to annex East Jerusalem and its declaration of the so-called Basic Law; consider all such actions null and void and call for their full revocation, as called for, *inter alia*, by Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 471 (1980), 476 (1980) and 478 (1980).

The fact of the matter is that in Jerusalem — as in all other occupied territories but even more so — Israel continues to construct settlements, appropriate the properties of Palestinian Arabs and harass them by various means, including the demolition of their houses in order to displace them under various pretexts. It is worth noting that Israel's first action after occupying East Jerusalem in 1967 was the total demolition of what was called the Moroccan Quarter within hours and the displacement of its inhabitants.

As for the settlements, their construction has proceeded apace since that date. As the number of settlers in East Jerusalem now exceeds 250,000, about 35 per cent of the territories of East Jerusalem have been expropriated for purposes of settlement, while Palestinian Arabs are not allowed to build, except in 13 per cent of East Jerusalem. Naturally, the latter is theoretical because most of that area has already been built up. Moreover, obtaining building permits from the occupation authorities is simply one of the most difficult, if not impossible, tasks facing Palestinian residents. Between 1967 and the end of last year, Israel had demolished more than 2,000 homes in East Jerusalem and expelled more than 14,309 inhabitants. Let us not forget the role of the separation wall and the policy of the occupation authorities in encircling East Jerusalem with settlements in a manner that impedes connections between it and the northern, southern and even eastern West Bank, in addition to its policy of preventing all other inhabitants of the West Bank from

entering Jerusalem except by special permits, which are of course not easy to obtain.

When we say that Jerusalem is the road to a just and comprehensive peace in our region, we mean that until the occupation of East Jerusalem is ended and Arab-Palestinian rights, Christian and Islamic, are restored there, there will be no viable peaceful settlement. East Jerusalem alone is the capital of the State of Palestine. There is no other substitute for the State of Palestine. What the occupation has called a “united Jerusalem”, the eternal capital of the State of Israel, is not united except under an occupation that is rejected by the world, the entire world. That alleged unity is a product of war and the logic of force. It is simply an expression of domination and complete absorption.

Jerusalem refuses to be a monochromatic city. It is sacred not to Jews alone. In Jerusalem, Christ spread his message. It contains the road of Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. For Muslims, it is the first of two kiblas and the third noble sanctuary. It is also the land to which the Prophet made the night journey and where he ascended to heaven. Only with the end of the occupation of East Jerusalem and the restoration of the usurped Arab rights to it — Christian and Islamic — will Jerusalem regain its significance as a city of peace, a city of humanity in its entirety and of the loftiest values of humankind.

In conclusion, I cannot find more eloquent than the words of the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

“In Jerusalem, I mean within the ancient walls, I walk from one epoch to another without a memory to guide me. The prophets over there are sharing the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven and returning less discouraged and melancholy because love and peace are holy and are coming to town.”

Ms. Rios Requena (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me on behalf of my delegation to offer our most sincere congratulations to the presidency of the General Assembly on its work at this session. My delegation welcomes the commendable action of Mr. Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and its Bureau, and their excellent work in providing transparent information on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia reaffirms its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian

people and its right to a free, sovereign and independent State within its 1967 international borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Plurinational State of Bolivia reaffirms its support for Palestine in this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/12, an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, and the implementation of the two-State solution in order to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

Bolivia strongly condemns the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian people, which violates basic principles of international humanitarian law and other, similar human rights law, in clear breach of several resolutions of the General Assembly, including resolution 181 (III) of 1947. My country most vehemently repudiates the horrendous terrorist and genocidal attack known as Operation Protective Edge launched by the Israeli army against the Palestinian people, who suffered 50 days of a bloody onslaught that killed 2,189 Palestinians, 67 per cent of whom were civilians, including 513 children and 269 women, and wounded over 11,000.

My country was horrified by reports issued by various organizations describing the destruction of the homes of over 100,000 civilian Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli bombs, rendering them uninhabitable, which was followed by ongoing arbitrary detentions, kidnappings, corporal and psychological torture and inflammatory statements. Even more extreme and damaging actions have been undertaken, including denying civilians the right to food and basic hygiene in illegal Israeli detention centres. Israel has thereby placed in full view of the international community its intention to pursue its genocidal acts.

The State of Israel is pursuing its policy of expanding its illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and has approved thousands of new housing units, as a result of which today there are increasing incursions of Israeli extremists on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, ongoing land confiscations, excavations close to the holy sites, the demolition of houses, revocations of identity documents and evictions of Palestinian residents.

Most of the population of Gaza have lost their productive assets. Some 419 businesses and shops were damaged and 128 were completely destroyed. This has wrought even more havoc on the economy — 30,000

people have lost their jobs, and 17,000 hectares of farmland in Gaza, representing a large part of its agricultural infrastructure, suffered direct damage. The Gaza central power plant, which suffered damaged in an Israeli air strike on 29 July, remains shut, and power shortages for over 18 hours a day continue in most areas. The Government of the State of Palestine has estimated that the reconstruction of Gaza will cost \$7.8 billion.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia deems it unacceptable that thousands of Palestinians, including many women and children, remain detained in Israeli prisons under harsh conditions, including a lack of hygiene, isolation, denial of due process, lack of adequate medical care and the denial of family visits, as well as harassment and the deaths of seriously ill prisoners and detainees.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia will continue to join forces with the international community to ensure that the Palestinian people's aspirations to peace, freedom, justice and dignity finally become part of human history, in harmony with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III).

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): Today Pakistan expresses its full solidarity with the people of Palestine. The people of Pakistan steadfastly stand by Palestine in its quest to fulfil its legitimate aspiration to enjoy the right to self-determination and full statehood.

The Palestinians continue to pass through a dark chapter in their history, but the Palestinians and the international community must not lose hope. Today as we speak, our hearts go out to the Gazans who suffered so grievously this past summer. We condemn the recent acts of desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, attacks against worshippers and the use of weapons and bombs inside the Mosque by the Israeli army. The Mosque was closed to worshippers for the first time since 1967. The remaining restrictions on worship must end. Steps to erase the Palestinian, Muslim and Christian heritage must be halted.

Last year, the General Assembly declared 2014 to be the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As the Secretary-General reports, the year started with a great sense of hope, but it is ending with a return to violence. The peace process has broken down and prospects of peace have further diminished. The massive settlements, which have increased by 150 per

cent during the past year and culminated in the largest land grab in three decades, doomed the faint hope for peace right from the beginning. The 50-day spate of violence in Gaza over the summer, which left more than 2,100 Palestinians dead, exacerbated the humanitarian plight of Gazans who were already short of food and dependent on aid.

We welcome the establishment of a Board of Inquiry by the Secretary-General and a Commission of Inquiry by the Human Rights Council to look into the events of Gaza. Those are steps in the right direction, but a lot will depend on whether they will be allowed to complete their inquiries, or whether their recommendations will be implemented at all.

Over the past year destruction, demolitions and forced displacements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem have increased by 24 per cent. The impact of Israeli restrictions on the movement of Palestinian people and goods led to the decline of economic growth in the occupied Palestinian territory from an average of 11 per cent a few years ago to a mere 1.5 per cent last year. All of this highlights the dire situation of the Palestinian people.

A revitalization of the peace process would bring fleeting hope, but without a serious, sincere commitment to peace, dialogue for the sake of dialogue will serve no purpose. So far, the efforts of the international community, the Security Council and the General Assembly to revive the peace process have failed. The initiatives of the Quartet and the Arab League have not been productive. Questions are being raised about the viability and relevance of a two-State solution.

We commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary of State John Kerry for investing political capital and energy in the peace process. We especially thank the Secretary-General for his energetic diplomacy to defuse the crisis in Gaza and to channel humanitarian aid to the devastated areas.

This dark moment in the history of the Middle East must be transformed into a defining moment. For that, the prevalent paradigm of strategic thinking and calculations has to change. Both sides and the international community have to realize that it is now or never. Violence will offer no solution. The parties should step back to reflect, make hard choices and give peace a chance.

Direct negotiations, based on internationally agreed parameters, with clear benchmarks and timelines are

the only option. The only path to viable and sustainable peace is the establishment of the State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. Until this realization sinks in, peace will remain elusive. The vacating of all Arab lands by Israel, including the Syrian Golan, is imperative for peace in the Middle East.

There have been positive developments too. Sweden has recognized Palestine. The British, Irish and Spanish Parliaments have voted for Palestinian statehood. The French Parliament is contemplating doing so. This is a growing trend, and the writing is on the wall. Other States will follow suit. The Security Council has a draft resolution on its table that could pave the way for a clearly marked pathway to peace. It would return the Council to the helm of maintaining peace and security, where it belongs. We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to influence the future of the next generations of their States and the future of their region. They must start talks for enduring peace.

In the meantime, the following steps should be taken as a matter of urgency. The blockade of Gaza should be lifted. The demolition of Palestinian houses and the expulsion of Palestinians from their properties must stop. All Palestinian prisoners must be released. And pledges for the reconstruction of Gaza should be honoured by contributors and donors. In this context, we pay tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its solid plans for recovery and reconstruction and for the sacrifices its staff has rendered. The Government of Pakistan is contributing \$1 million to UNRWA. We hope that this would help alleviate in a small measure the suffering of the Palestinian victims of the Israeli military offensive in Gaza.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): As we gather here today, Israeli violations continue in Jerusalem, in addition to the ongoing illegal provocations in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. Their aim is to consecrate the occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people.

We condemn the actions taken against the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the failure to respect its sacred character. It is one of the holiest sites for Muslims. We condemn the refusal of the Israeli occupying Power to let Muslim worshippers enter the Mosque. We call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to assume its responsibilities and bring an end to the daily violations committed

by Israel against Haram Al-Sharif. Moreover, Israeli political and religious extremists are being allowed to desecrate Haram Al-Sharif under the protection of the Israeli police. All of this follows the illegal 50-day Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip last summer. That crushing aggression left thousands of dead and wounded and incalculable destruction, outstripping the devastation in the Gaza Strip in 2009. This is just the latest in the long list of Israeli violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Today's meeting is being held as we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and commemorate the adoption by the General Assembly of its historic resolution 67/19, according to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. We appreciate and express our gratitude for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. We thank them for their continuous, tireless and intense efforts to shed light on the suffering of the Palestinian people and to support their rights and legitimate political aspirations.

Kuwait reiterates the legal basis of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to assume the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. Positive steps must be taken to achieve peace through the adoption of the draft resolution submitted to the Council by the Group of Arab States, which is based on the identification of a timeline for ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The ongoing settlement policy of the Israeli Government, the occupying Power, must be condemned, as must its appropriation of land, its expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, farmland and property, and its detention without trial of Palestinians in its prisons and detention centres. We are deeply concerned by the occupying Power Government's pursuit of its policy of building new settlements in Jerusalem, the

West Bank and other areas of the occupied territories. We must call on the international community to bring pressure to bear, to bring these practices to an end and to insist on respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

We listened to the representative of Israel. We will not respond to what he said except to say that it shows once again that Israel believes itself to be above the law and able to flout the resolutions of the United Nations. He attacked all parties that oppose the policies pursued by the occupying Power.

In the past, there has been talk of preserving the status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories, which presages dangerous consequences in the light of a freeze on peace efforts based on the two-State solution. Kuwait would therefore call on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to halt its policies of aggression, end the construction of illegal settlements in the occupied territories, stop its repeated desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, cease all its attempts to change the demographic and geographic nature of Jerusalem, lift its illegal blockade on Gaza immediately and unconditionally, respect international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1860 (2009), and withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967.

Kuwait calls for the immediate release of all Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons, particularly sick people and the young, including those detained before the Oslo Accords. We call on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel in order that it treat Palestinian prisoners as prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva Conventions, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a first step towards their release. We reiterate our demand for Israel to implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which calls on it to withdraw from the Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line. Continuing Israeli occupation of Syrian territory is a real obstacle to peace and security in the Middle East.

The State of Kuwait renews its commitment to standing side by side with Lebanon to preserve its security and territorial integrity. We call on Israel to stop its ongoing violations of Lebanese land and air space, withdraw from the remainder of occupied Lebanese territories and respect the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

In conclusion, we reiterate our solidarity with and full support for the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations. We pay tribute to their courage and their resolve to exercise their rights to their land and holy places. The Government and the people of Kuwait will continue providing political, moral and material support to them so that the Israeli occupation can be ended and so that a Palestinian State can be established with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the principles of the Madrid Conference, the Quartet road map and the Arab League Initiative.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I am very pleased to see you, Madam, presiding over today's meeting on some very important agenda items. I wish to address both agenda item 35, "The situation in the Middle East", and agenda item 36, "Question of Palestine". I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Riyadh Mansour, Permanent Observer of the observer State of Palestine, as we celebrate today the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The long-awaited direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine came to an abrupt halt in April. That was followed by the eruption of the Gaza crisis from July to August. Under these circumstances, we unfortunately do not foresee the resumption of negotiations any time soon. Meanwhile, we see troubling signs of tension, exacerbated by the recent clashes at the Al-Aqsa compound and the attack on the Har Nof synagogue. Japan condemns all violence, violation and incitement. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the victims and their bereaved families.

We commend the efforts made by the Jordanian Government to calm the situation. We welcome that during United States Secretary of State Kerry's recent visit to Amman, the leaders of Israel, Jordan and Palestine agreed to work to calm the situation. We attach importance to the affirmations made by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to maintain the status quo on the Al-Aqsa compound. Japan therefore calls on both the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to exercise political leadership and courage to ease tensions and refrain from unilateral action and incitement. Both sides must work towards enhancing mutual trust for the resumption of peace negotiations.

The recent crisis in Gaza was the third large-scale conflict in the past six years. The vicious cycle of mistrust and violence must end. Recent events have reaffirmed, once again, the need for a just, durable and

comprehensive peace based on a two-State solution. From this viewpoint, the land seizures by Israel in September in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are not only illegal, but run counter to international efforts in favour of a two-State solution. Japan calls on Israel to completely freeze its settlement activities, which are violations of international law. Correspondingly, we look to the Palestinian National Unity Government to remain committed to the renunciation of violence, recognition of the State of Israel and adherence to previous diplomatic agreements. Japan also calls on Palestine to refrain from any unilateral action that may hinder the resumption of peace negotiations.

Japan will continue to assist the parties in building mutual confidence. Furthermore, we must look to nurturing mutual confidence in future generations. In this regard, Japan recently welcomed ten young leaders from Israel and Palestine under our Invitation Programme for Confidence-Building. Since 1996, the Japanese Government has invited more than 200 young people from both Israel and Palestine. These visits have strengthened their mutual trust and deepened their understanding about Japan's peace efforts in the Middle East region.

Japan pledged to provide more than \$20 million in aid to Palestine at the Gaza reconstruction conference held in October, in addition to the \$7.8 million already disbursed in August. These pledges constitute a part of Japan's \$200-million pledge announced by our Foreign Minister Kishida at the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), held in Jakarta in March. These commitments, however, were made not for a return to the status quo ante, but rather to support the parties involved in attaining a sustainable ceasefire, peaceful coexistence and prosperity in the region. We therefore recall the importance of establishing an international follow-up mechanism that addresses the issues of security, humanitarian assistance and good governance. Japan stands ready to work towards that goal with Israel, Palestine and the United Nations, inter alia.

As we pursue the goal of a two-State solution, we must also strengthen the economic foundations that will underpin the overall political process. From this perspective, Japan continues to make a distinct contribution by mobilizing private investment in Palestine. One such example is the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative, whose flagship project,

the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park complex, seeks to transform the area into an export centre. It is anticipated that the project will create 7,000 jobs, with expected annual economic benefits of more than \$40 million. Moreover, the joint project, led by Japan in collaboration with Israel, Jordan and Palestine, is a well-grounded exercise in building mutual confidence. We are pleased that 11 companies have already signed tenant contracts, and one is due to begin operations soon.

Japan is also looking to channel East Asian countries' experience and resources for Palestine's development. In February 2013, with that objective in mind, we initiated the CEAPAD, and numerous capacity-building projects, in cooperation with Indonesia and Malaysia, have already been implemented. We note with appreciation that through a joint proposal with my colleague Ambassador Desra Percaya of Indonesia, the Assembly will welcome CEAPAD's progress in draft resolution A/69/L.24, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", to be adopted tomorrow.

The recent Gaza crisis and the ensuing tensions on the ground have shown how urgent it is that we advance the peace process. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Japan, in cooperation with the United Nations and the international community, remains committed to playing an important role in the pursuit of durable peace and prosperity in the region.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the Committee's valuable report (A/69/35), presented to us today. It reveals the reality of what has taken place in the Palestinian territories that have been occupied since 1967 and the various efforts being made to put an end to the Israeli occupation and establish an independent and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We would also like to thank the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat for its Palestine programme and the media coverage it orchestrated in every forum on the occasion of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Today, the world is once again celebrating the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People against a backdrop of circumstances that at a minimum can be termed inhuman, and under which our Palestinian brothers have suffered injustice and oppression. The Kingdom of Bahrain therefore reiterates its continuing involvement in the question of Palestine

and its support for our brothers, the Palestinian people, in working to enable them to exercise their inalienable rights. Prime among those is the establishment of an independent State on its national territory, such as others enjoy around the world, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the restoration of all its legitimate rights as established in various international instruments.

To that end, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain has written a letter, emphasizing that a just and comprehensive solution can be achieved only through the establishment of a full-fledged Palestinian State, enjoying all sovereign rights within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in a two-State solution as outlined in the Arab Peace Initiative and all the relevant international instruments and resolutions. In that regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain commends Sweden's decision to recognize the State of Palestine and the right of the Palestinian people to live side by side with Israel. We call on all friendly nations that have not yet done so to follow suit, in order to meet the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people and promote stability, peace and security in the Middle East.

The Committee's report describes various forms of the suffering of the Palestinian people in much detail. The situation it describes in occupied East Jerusalem is very worrying, due to the increased number of attacks by Israeli extremists on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and of acts of provocation and incitement, along with the continuing confiscation of lands, excavations near holy sites and demolitions of houses, as well as other issues such as the expulsion of people from their homes.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to reiterate the necessity of implementing international resolutions and to support international efforts leading to the granting to the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our meeting today is being held against a backdrop of regrettable events in the occupied Palestinian territory. This summer the world witnessed atrocities of war in the Gaza Strip and large-scale targeting of civilians, as well as destruction of the Gaza Strip's infrastructure and attacks on other targets that are firmly and clearly prohibited by international law. That has resulted in more than 2,500 civilian dead and thousands wounded and destruction on a huge scale. In the past two months,

we have witnessed a major increase in colonizing activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as unprecedented provocative measures in East Jerusalem's holy sites, constituting an attempt to create a new status quo on the ground that is illegal under international laws and rejected by Egypt and the entire international community.

Israel's most recent acts are dangerous not only because they flagrantly violate international law and threaten peace and security in the region and around the world, but also because they undermine the peace process as a whole. They are aimed at radically changing the situation in Jerusalem and increasing the number of settlements and colonized areas, putting the chances of achieving a two-State solution in jeopardy and thus obstructing the possibility of a viable Palestinian State. Along with the entire international community, including the State of Palestine, Egypt condemns every act of violence against civilians and calls on Israel to cease all illegal measures in the occupied Palestinian territories immediately.

Egypt, in collaboration with Norway, organized the International Conference on Palestine and Reconstructing Gaza, held on 12 October in Cairo. The Conference was highly successful, mobilizing \$5.4 billion through international contributions pledged. We should recall how important it is that donor countries honour the commitments they made at the Conference. In order to reap the full fruits of the Gaza Reconstruction Conference, it is also essential that delivery of construction materials to the Gaza Strip be accelerated so that 80,000 Palestinians can begin to restore and return to their homes, as well as to revive the hopes of Gaza's residents, whose suffering in a decade-long war has lasted too long.

During the Conference on Reconstructing Gaza, many participants, including the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies, reiterated the importance of ensuring that the Cairo meeting will be the last reconstruction conference we will ever have to hold, and we are in full agreement.

We reiterate from this rostrum, however, that the only guarantee of achieving a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine is by ending the occupation and creating a Palestinian State with full sovereignty, and with East Jerusalem as its capital. The guarantee must also resolve the question of the refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III) of 1948. Without such a solution, sooner or later the region will witness

a new cycle of violence, again leading to mass killings and destruction that will destroy any hope for stability in the Middle East. It will mark the continuation of the intolerable injustice against the brotherly Palestinian people and the deprivation of their rights as guaranteed by international laws and instruments and the most fundamental human rights, including the right to live a life of dignity in an undiminished and fully independent State.

Egypt aligns itself with the international community and the brotherly Palestinian people in pursuing tireless efforts towards a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine based on the relevant resolutions and international law. We call on the United Nations and the Security Council to play a crucial role in achieving that solution within a reasonable time frame, taking into consideration that the occupation has persisted and little patience remains on the part of the Palestinian and the Arab peoples and the international community. The solution must guarantee all rights of the Palestinians, be based on law as the sole criterion, and disregard balances of power, political alliances and other factors that have contributed to depriving the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Today the United Nations is celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which serves as yet another reminder to the international community that it is urgent to find a solution to the question of Palestine.

The question of Palestine is an important root cause of the long-term turmoil in the Middle East. The question of Palestine and Israel is the core of the Middle East issue. An early resolution of the question would help to promote world peace and stability.

China regrets that the question of Palestine has persisted for over half a century and that, even today, the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine have not been restored. The talks between Israel and Palestine lapse into a stalemate from time to time, and repeated eruptions of conflict between the two sides have brought enormous suffering to the people of Palestine. The international community must therefore step up its efforts and work innovatively to create synergies and achieve a solution to the question of Palestine.

China remains committed to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal for the

settlement of the question of Palestine. It indicates the correct path to follow to achieve an independent Palestinian State and the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel. Negotiations are the only way to achieve peace between Palestine and Israel. Principles such as land for peace should be firmly upheld. The international community should provide important guarantees for progress in the peace process.

As we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, President Xi Jinping has sent a congratulatory message, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, to express sympathy and support to the Palestinian people. President Xi emphasized that China firmly supports the just cause of the Palestinian people in fighting for the restoration of their legitimate rights and interests.

China supports the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, enjoying full sovereignty within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support Palestine's accession to membership of the United Nations and other international organizations. It is China's sincere hope that Palestine and Israel will resume the peace talks as soon as possible so as to give peace a chance and ensure lasting peace for the people of Palestine.

Peace between Palestine and Israel is a common aspiration of the people of the world. The international community should provide further assistance in that respect. China supports the United Nations and the Security Council in playing their requisite roles. At the same time, a comprehensive solution to the Middle East question cannot be separated from the settlement of the issues between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel, respectively. The Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel tracks are important components of the peace process in the Middle East.

China firmly supports Syria and Lebanon in safeguarding their national sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate desire to recover their occupied territories. We support the strategic choice made by the Arab countries to promote comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. China is ready to work with the international community to advance the peace process in the Middle East.

A turbulent Middle East, fraught with hot-spot issues and spreading terrorism, seriously challenges international peace and security. Promoting peace, stability and development in the Middle East is in the

common interests of the international community. China closely follows the situations in the Middle East and has consistently advocated respect for the rights of the countries and peoples of the region, including their right to choose their own political systems and development paths in light of their particular situations.

We encourage all concerned parties to seek to resolve their differences through inclusive political dialogue. We hold that in addressing the Middle East issues the international community should adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations. We reject external military intervention and the overthrow of a country's legitimate Government by force. We further hold that the international community should adhere to uniform criteria in countering terrorist threats. It should remain committed to the peace process in the Middle East, and scale up its economic assistance to and cooperation with the Middle East with a view to creating favourable conditions for achieving peace, stability and development in the region. China stands ready to work with the international community in its ongoing efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the Middle East.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the President for convening this important discussion in the General Assembly on the question of Palestine.

We are marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this important occasion, let me reiterate India's unwavering support for the just cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle. Our Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi has today sent a message on this occasion, reaffirming that support and solidarity. Our civilizational links and historical bonds with the Palestinian people span centuries. We therefore have a clear understanding of their struggle and unwavering sympathy for their cause.

India's position on the Palestinian question is inspired by our own freedom struggle, led by Mahatma Gandhi, who supported the rights of the Palestinian people. Since then, India's commitment to the Palestinian cause has been a core feature of its foreign policy. India supports a negotiated solution that would

result in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

The suffering of the people in Gaza persists in the aftermath of this summer's conflict, which resulted in the tragic loss of civilian lives, especially among women and children, and extensive destruction of houses and infrastructure. It is important that the blockade of Gaza be fully lifted and that humanitarian supplies and desperately needed materials for reconstruction be allowed in without restrictions.

We are deeply concerned over rising tensions in East Jerusalem. The imperative need is for urgent de-escalation, restraint, avoidance of provocation and a return to the peace process. Diplomacy and statesmanship have to prevail over hatred and violence. There is no other road to lasting peace.

Apart from offering strong political support to the Palestinian cause, India continues to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine by consistently extending technical and financial assistance. It also contributes \$1 million annually to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. India has recently pledged \$4 million in response to the national early recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza. We are also implementing development projects in Palestine jointly with Brazil and South Africa, within the framework of the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum, and have pledged \$1 million for a new project to reconstruct the Atta Habib Medical Centre in Gaza.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind". The need of the hour is to listen to his wise words and eschew hatred and violence. We firmly believe that dialogue is the only viable option in the search for a just, durable and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to return to the negotiating table and resume dialogue.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.