
**UNITED NATIONS
LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING
IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE**

The urgency of realizing a two-State solution

Montevideo, 29 and 30 March 2011

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 29 and

30 March 2011. It was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (hereafter “the Committee”) and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 65/13 and 65/14 of 30 November 2010. The theme of the Meeting was “The urgency of realizing a two-State solution”.

2. The Committee was represented at the Meeting by a delegation comprising Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal), Chair of the Committee; Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan); Oumar Daou (Mali), Carmen Zilia Pérez Mazón (Cuba); José Luis Cancela (Uruguay); and Riyad Mansour (Palestine).

3. The Meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: “Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians: obstacles and opportunities”; “Support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine”; and “The role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict”.

4. At the Meeting, presentations were made by 17 experts, including Palestinian and Israeli experts. Representatives of 41 Governments, Palestine, 5 intergovernmental organizations, 3 United Nations bodies, 15 civil society organizations, and 26 media outlets, as well as special guests and members of the public, attended the Meeting.

5. A concluding statement by the organizers was introduced during the closing session of the Meeting (see annex I to the present report).

6. The Meeting was immediately followed by the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which was held on 31 March 2011, also in Montevideo, Uruguay.

II. Opening session

7. **Luis Almagro**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, underscored Latin America’s sincere support for the peace process and said the region’s Governments, at the close of the Latin American Alliance for Peace in the Middle East Forum, held in San José, Costa Rica, from 11 to 12 March 2011, had signed a declaration officially recognizing Palestine as a sovereign, independent State. Uruguay was a strong supporter of Palestine and the two-State solution and believed that Palestine met the definition and criteria for statehood set forth in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States.

8. There could be no peace in the region without the creation of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side, and Uruguay had taken concrete steps to strengthen trade, cultural and social ties with both nations, Mr. Almagro said. For example, during its chairmanship of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) – South America’s largest trading bloc – Uruguay had signed a free-trade agreement with Israel that entered into force one year ago. In addition to recently recognizing the State of Palestine, Uruguay had installed diplomats there and was implementing a bilateral framework agreement.

9. Mr. Almagro stressed the importance of recognizing Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad’s two-year State-building programme and plan for socio-economic development, particularly in the light of the region’s vast socio-economic disparities, which were exacerbated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the conflict. In the last few years, Uruguay had adopted an open policy toward Middle Eastern countries, opening diplomatic missions in several capitals in the region. Despite its small size, Uruguay was determined to bring goodwill and contribute to the peace process.

10. A statement was delivered on behalf of **Ban Ki-moon**, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, by his representative at the Meeting, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. In that statement, the Secretary-General called on the parties to bolster efforts to reach agreement on permanent status issues and to cease unilateral action that could jeopardize peace talks aimed at achieving Palestinian Statehood. “Actions that prejudice the outcome of the process must stop, including Israel’s continued settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which is illegal under international law and which contradicts the Road Map,” he said.

11. The Secretary-General strongly condemned the recent deadly bomb attack in West Jerusalem and said all expressions of violence must stop. He also called on Israel to further open border crossings into Gaza, where the situation was unsustainable, and to further improve economic and security conditions in the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory by reducing obstacles to movement, halting military action and giving the Palestinian Authority access to Areas B and C.

12. The Secretary-General lauded the Palestinian Authority’s efforts to establish viable State institutions, which were an integral part of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad’s two-year State-building programme launched in August 2009. A way must be found for Jerusalem to emerge as the capital of both Israel and Palestine, with arrangements for holy sites acceptable to all. It was also important to respond to the Palestinian people’s legitimate call for reunification and to find a just solution to the prolonged plight of Palestinian refugees. Indeed, serious efforts were needed to break the current deadlock and bring both sides back to the negotiating table as soon as possible to reach a long-overdue resolution to the conflict. “The status quo is untenable, particularly at a time when so many throughout the region are pursuing freedom and dignity through non-violence – a reawakening also being felt among Palestinians,” he said.

13. **Abdou Salam Diallo**, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, delivered an opening statement on behalf of the Committee. He said the Meeting was taking place at a time of continued efforts to restart the Israeli-Palestinian political process, as well as profound political transformations sweeping North Africa and the Middle East, which entailed new dynamics and challenges, as well as opportunities. Noting that the Palestinian Authority was preparing to complete its two-year State-building plan by September 2011, he stressed that the recent escalation of violence on the ground only underscored the urgency to break the political deadlock that had stalled direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for months.

14. Mr. Diallo noted the important role of Latin American and Caribbean countries with regard to Israeli-Palestinian peace and efforts to achieve a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States. In that context, he lauded the recent recognition by a number of Latin American countries, including Uruguay, of the State of Palestine. The Committee welcomed such timely gestures, which would help the Palestinian people achieve independence and sovereignty. Other gestures, such as a recent forum in Costa Rica entitled “Latin American Alliance for Peace in the Middle East: the Role of Latin American Civil Societies,” were commendable. In addition, it was symbolic that the present Meeting was taking place

in Montevideo, where the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, had been signed in 1933, setting out the definition, the criteria, and the rights and duties of statehood.

15. For the Committee's part, it would continue to carry out its mandate entrusted to it by the United Nations General Assembly in order to bring an end to the decades of occupation and realize a two-State solution through the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, international law, previous agreements, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

16. **Saeb Erakat**, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), spoke as a representative of Palestine. He said the two-State solution was strategically the best option for achieving peace in the region, and all of its aspects were doable. "I believe negotiations are over between the Palestinians and Israel," he said. Pertinent issues, such as borders, refugees and settlements, had already been spoken about, and now was the time for decisions.

17. Mr. Erakat implored Latin American and Caribbean countries that had not yet done so to formally recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with international law. "Being a friend of Palestine does not mean that you're an enemy of Israel, on the contrary," he said, adding that peace had no religious, cultural or political boundaries. No country, particularly Israel, should be scared of the democratic winds sweeping the Arab world, and anyone who claimed Arabs were against democracy was a racist. He looked forward to forging good relations with Latin American civil society, and in that context, said, "What can we contribute to positively impact the outcome in the Middle East? This is the question leaders and intellectuals should ask."

18. A representative of **Namibia** said that his country, which had also been occupied, wanted Palestinians to be able to live in dignity and peace and to create their own independent, sovereign State, as Namibia had. After achieving its own independence, Namibia had formally recognized the State of Palestine, and he commended Latin American nations that had recently done the same. He condemned all actions that impeded durable peace in the region, stressing that Israel must demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt its commitment to peace. Achieving a just, lasting comprehensive settlement to the conflict, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative, was crucial for regional stability.

19. The representative of **Ecuador** said that, in accordance with Ecuador's new Constitution, which condemned foreign occupation and honoured the principles of international law, his Government had on 24 December 2010 recognized Palestine as a free, independent State based on the 1967 borders. Ecuador had supported all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, condemned the use of force against Palestinians, and supported the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to preserve the population configuration of Israelis and Palestinians in the region, which had been altered by Israel's separation wall.

20. The representative of **Cuba** condemned Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory and destruction of Palestinian homes, as well as the ensuing hardship suffered by the Palestinian people. She regretted that peace plans had repeatedly failed. A few weeks earlier, the Security Council had failed to approve a draft resolution on Israeli settlements because the United States had vetoed it. Cuba had always been faithful to its position of solidarity with the Palestinian people. When it had been necessary to appear before the International Court of Justice and seek an advisory opinion on Israel's separation wall, Cuba had been there. Whenever the General Assembly took up the question of Palestine, Cuba was also always there, with its voice and its vote. Cuba was encouraged by the growing number of nations recognizing Palestine, including from within Latin America and the Caribbean.

21. In a written statement submitted to the Meeting, the representative of **Guyana** said the people of Palestine had for far too long suffered without a homeland and had endured unspeakable human rights abuses. The time had come for the international community to significantly enhance its efforts towards a just solution to the plight of the Palestinians, and solving the problem hinged on continued support from regional partners and the international community as a whole. Negotiations were the only way for the parties to bring a long awaited end to the conflict, and Guyana called upon both sides to show leadership and responsibility to realize the hopes and aspirations of both peoples. Guyana also continued to call for an end to all forms of violence on both sides. As the first Caribbean Community (CARICOM) country to recognize Palestine as a sovereign State based on its 1967 borders, Guyana would continue to show support for the people of Palestine and continue to work with the international community in all efforts towards a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

22. In a written statement submitted to the Meeting, the representative of **Indonesia** noted that the question of Palestine remained unsolved and stressed that Indonesia remained committed to supporting the Committee's efforts to work towards achieving a two-State solution. Indonesia also welcomed recent recognitions of the State of Palestine from Latin American and Caribbean Governments. Such support from the international community produced momentum for advancing towards a just and lasting peace.

23. Following the statements by Governments, **Saeb Erakat**, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, took the floor again to deliver a keynote address. He said that, in recognizing the State of Palestine, Uruguay and other Latin American and Caribbean countries were rejecting Israel's claim to the territory it acquired by force in 1967. Their stance also brought clout to the diplomatic process to resolve the conflict, and others in the region should follow in their footsteps. "Through your principled and courageous support of a just solution, you can continue to serve the interest of peace, help create global momentum for a solution and give our people much-needed hope," he said.

24. Mr. Erakat added that countries should also boycott imported goods made in Israeli settlements, which were inextricably linked to violations of international humanitarian law. Vineyards in settlements, for example, were grown on stolen Palestinian land and irrigated with stolen Palestinian water. By importing such goods, third parties unwittingly gave Israel incentives to retain and even expand such settlements. It was imperative that the billions of dollars traded annually between Israel and MERCOSUR did not help them in that process.

25. Mr. Erakat noted that Palestinians suffered great hardship, as evidenced by their scant \$2,000 gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, versus the \$30,000 per capita in Israel. Today, some 500,000 Israeli settlers lived in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and their numbers continued to grow. Israel's continued colonization of Palestinian land had fully undermined the credibility of the peace process to the point where the two-State solution could cease in the near term to be a practical option for the Palestinians. To make matters worse, the current Israeli Government did not even recognize the 1967 borders as a baseline for discussion nor had it put forward any proposal for a comprehensive peace agreement.

26. Still, evolving conditions on the ground were creating important opportunities for a comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement, Mr. Erakat said. As Palestinian institutions and public services had been substantially strengthened in recent years, across the Arab world people were demanding Government accountability and respect for their basic rights and dignity, leading to rapid change few had thought possible. Arabs, contrary to the goals of Osama Bin Laden, were effecting regime change without violence. Those recent events were proof that human rights and people's dignity could not be ignored without consequence. Moreover, people worldwide were increasingly speaking out about Israel's illegal policies toward Palestinians, offended by its injustice and inhumanity.

27. Mr. Erakat said that Western nations had an important choice. The system that begun in 1916 when the Arab world had been divided up by colonizers from the United Kingdom and United States, was being dismantled, and it could no longer survive. Arabs no longer needed autocratic, theocratic systems of Government, which had created Osama Bin Laden; they needed democracy. It had been easier thus far for many in the West to favour autocratic rule in the Arab world, but the international community should not tolerate dictators nor close their eyes to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territory, the worst form of state terror, particularly if it wanted to defeat Osama Bin Laden and other extremist forces.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary I

Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians: obstacles and opportunities

28. The speakers in plenary I addressed the following sub-themes: "The impact of settlement expansion on prospects for achieving a two-State solution"; "The question of Jerusalem: a key to Israeli-Palestinian peace"; and "Bridging gaps and building trust: international efforts at resuming direct peace negotiations between the parties".

29. **Yariv Oppenheimer**, Director-General of the Tel Aviv-based non-governmental organization Peace Now, said Israel had set up settlements in an attempt to prevent the creation of a Palestinian State, to ease overcrowding in Jerusalem and Israeli cities along the Green Line, and to fulfil the religious ideology of the right of Jews to occupy the entire Holy Land. Some 300,000 Jewish settlers lived in 140 settlements dotting the West Bank, more than double the number from 1993 when the Oslo Agreement was signed. Peace Now did not support those arguments. "We are against all settlement activity. It is immoral, unjust and against international law, and the results would prevent the two sides from reaching final agreement and a two-State solution," he said.

30. Mr. Oppenheimer noted that Israel's attitude towards settlements was ambivalent, with settlers presented as both pioneers at the forefront of protecting the State's borders, as well as extremists endangering peace. Recent disappointments, such as Hamas' rise after Israel withdrew from Gaza and the Palestinians' unwillingness to begin negotiations during the 2010 moratorium on settlement building, had strengthened the reputation of settlers among the Israeli public. It would be hard to reverse that sentiment unless public opinion towards Hamas changed and Israelis were confident that withdrawing from the West Bank would not result in a Hamas takeover there. Moreover, the Israeli Government was under pressure from local politicians to build settlements despite international and domestic opposition to it. Many political centrists in Israel supported building only in places likely to remain permanently under Israeli control even after an agreement was reached. He estimated that 100,000 settlers would need to leave after an accord was signed.

31. Mr. Oppenheimer said the Israeli Government currently allowed settlers to build if they had previous approval to do so, mainly in small, isolated settlements. Faced with growing pressure, the Government had stopped issuing new tenders. Still, after the 10-month moratorium on settlements expired in September 2010, construction of at least 1,756 new buildings had resumed in 63 settlements. While the situation had become more complicated and difficult to resolve over the years, it was not irreversible. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza had proven that with public support, settlers could be evacuated without the country entering into civil war.

32. **Hind Khoury**, former Minister for Jerusalem Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, said the peace process had gone on for too long, and Palestinians had paid too high a price from chronic occupation, daily humiliation, expulsions, oppressive laws, entrenched poverty and the lack of a real future. Under the Arab Peace Initiative, 57 Arab States had offered Israel peace and normal relations in exchange for returning all territories occupied since 1967. Still, peace was increasingly elusive. The greatest obstacle was the Israeli Homestead Act, by which Israel froze all Palestinian land registration in 1968, declared two thirds of land in East Jerusalem as "green areas" and began building Jewish settlements in them. It also stripped Palestinians who were absent from the territory in 1967 of all property rights, and since 1967, it had issued 50,000 settlement permits for Israelis compared with less than 15,000 housing permits for Palestinians. Israel continued to destroy Palestinian homes to make way for new Israeli constructions, as well as its separation wall. Israel spoke of "demographic security", with little regard for Palestinians' own security.

33. Ms. Khoury said that, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at least 28 per cent of all Palestinian homes were at risk for being demolished. Palestinian Jerusalemites who lived outside the city for seven years or more lost their right to return, a situation which had befallen her own children. Palestinian East Jerusalem's economy had been completely ruined; businesses and schools had closed, and unemployment was high. Israel had vastly changed the reality on the ground, seriously jeopardizing the Palestinians' ability to create a State, which would not be viable without East Jerusalem.

34. Ms. Khoury stressed that Israel must recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, renounce and stop all acts of violence and respect international law. Otherwise, it could not continue to claim it was a democracy. In addition, the Security Council must recognize the Palestinian State under those terms and the General Assembly must hold a session in which it adopted practical measures to end the occupation and recognized Palestine as a United Nations Member State. She believed that non-violent resistance would triumph and she thanked Latin American and Caribbean nations that had recognized the State of Palestine.

35. **Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy**, Senator in the Federal Senate of Brazil, said he supported non-violent resistance to advance the Palestinian cause. Everyone, including all Palestinians, must be able to participate in the wealth of their nation and enjoy a basic income. Despite their vastly different GDP per capita, it was possible for the Israelis and Palestinians to create an economic policy to build a just, civilized society. He suggested earmarking revenue generated by international tourism to the Holy Land for a fund to build a balanced, prosperous society for both Israelis and Palestinians. Elaborating further in response to a question, he said Israelis and Palestinians could have a common economic understanding similar to the ties shared among countries in the Americas.

36. Mr. Suplicy noted that, last Christmas, he had travelled to Bethlehem, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and attended mass, as a guest of the Palestinian Authority (PA). There, PA President Mahmoud Abbas had thanked the Brazilian Government for recognizing the State of Palestine with its 1967 borders. Mr. Suplicy recalled that Brazil's former President, Luiz Inácio **Lula** da Silva, had addressed Brazil's Arab community last year, and he noted that, throughout Brazilian society, in hospitals, universities, and in commerce, Brazilians of Jewish and Arab heritage enjoyed good relations with each other. "If we get along so well here, we can help them in Israel and Palestine to get along better," Mr. Suplicy said. He also noted that former President Lula had proposed a soccer match between Brazil's national team and a joint Israel-Palestinian team, perhaps to be played in London. However, in conversation with Mr. Suplicy, President Abbas had said he would prefer such a game being held in Tel Aviv.

37. **Marcelo Díaz**, a Member of Chile's Parliament, said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an "open wound" that endangered the credibility of institutions essential for the peaceful coexistence of nations. His recent visit, along with nine other Chilean parliamentarians, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory had taught him that the occupation had scarred and affected every area of Palestinian life. Palestinians had to endure long border crossings at checkpoints just to get medical treatment in Israel. They faced restrictions on movement that were unimaginable in other countries. Scarce water resources were not shared equitably, endangering the Palestinian people's very survival.

38. Mr. Díaz said that, under a United Nations mandate, several nations were intervening militarily in Libya to safeguard the rights of civilians and prevent a dictator from destroying his own people. He asked why the same means were not used to enforce international law to protect the Palestinians. He called on the international community to stop accepting the status quo and to follow the lead of Latin American countries that had already recognized the State of Palestine.

39. Mr. Díaz said that the time had come for Israel to prove its commitment to peace. But the Israeli Government would not change its stance without strong international pressure. In that regard, the Palestinian cause must truly be on the global agenda and everyone must be involved. The Israeli peace movement had not lost hope. On the contrary, it was part of an immense network struggling for peace and justice. Latin America was an important link in that chain, and its recent support for the State of Palestine was one of the "most important events in recent years and a substantial contribution to peace and justice."

40. **Meir Margalit**, a Member of the Municipal Council of the City of Jerusalem, questioned why no Israeli representatives were present at the Meeting, and dismissed their claims that the Meeting was unbalanced. The real reason was that while Israel wanted peace, it did not want to pay a price for it. As long as Israel remained undecided over whether land or human life was more important, there could be no peace.

41. Mr. Margalit said that Israel, rather than being a democracy as it claimed to be, was an "ethnocracy". "It's a democracy only for those who belong to the Hebrew club. But you can't be a half-democracy just like you can't be half-pregnant," he said, noting that 1.5 million Palestinians in Israel were oppressed daily. Palestinians comprised more than 35 per cent of the population of Jerusalem, but received only 11 per cent of that city's municipal budget.

42. Mr. Margalit added that, to truly be a democracy, Israel must first return the territories it had annexed, and then discuss peace from the perspective of not wanting to be an occupier. While the status quo had frustrated Israel's peace movement like never before, the crisis could serve as an opportunity to move forward. The peace movement's goal was to educate those Israelis who had turned a blind eye to the occupation, feigning ignorance to evade responsibility, and to eliminate "the ghost dominating the Israeli mind" by putting a human face on the Palestinians, who were seeking to live in peace in their own State like everyone else.

B. Plenary II

Support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine

43. The speakers in plenary II addressed the following sub-themes: "Diplomatic recognition of Palestinian Statehood by Governments of the region"; "The applicability of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States to the creation of the State of Palestine"; and "Action by Latin American and Caribbean States within the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other intergovernmental mechanisms".

44. At the beginning of plenary II, **Oumar Daou**, Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations, acting in his role as Committee Rapporteur, noted that, on the evening of 29 March 2011, Uruguay and Palestine had signed a protocol establishing diplomatic ties. He expressed appreciation to the Uruguayan Government for that important step and expressed pride that the signing had coincided with the holding of the Meeting.

45. **Walid Muqqaat**, Ambassador of Palestine to Argentina, said that societies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean had been enriched by immigrants from Palestine, and that the Palestine Liberation Organization had given a voice to Palestinians worldwide, including in Latin America. Beginning in the 1970s, several Latin American countries had established diplomatic ties with the PLO, which began opening representative offices throughout the region. By 1993, the PLO had set up diplomatic offices in eight Latin American countries, spurred by the Oslo Peace Agreement signed that year. By 2001, many of those offices had been upgraded to special delegations. In 2006, Palestinian diplomats persuaded the Governments of Costa Rica and El Salvador to withdraw their Israeli embassies from Jerusalem. In 2008, Costa Rica established diplomatic relations and soon after recognized the State of Palestine. In 2009, the Dominican Republic did the same. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas visited Latin America in 2009. That visit was followed by more by many senior Palestinian leaders, who shed light on the real state of affairs and asked Latin American leaders to support the creation of a Palestinian State on legal, moral and ethical grounds.

46. Mr. Muqqaat noted that, on 3 December 2010, Brazil had recognized the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders. The same month, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Guyana, Peru and Paraguay had also recognized the State of Palestine, as had Suriname on 1 February 2011, and Uruguay on 15 March 2011. All declarations of recognition clearly and unequivocally referred to international law, United Nations resolutions, the borders that existed on 4 June 1967, and the right of return of all Palestinian refugees. That trend showed the importance that Latin America gave to the creation of a Palestinian State living in peace and security with its neighbours. "This is telling the international community that Palestine exists and that its rights are in full force and that they must be respected. To recognize the Palestinian State is a non-violent reaction of the international community to the expansion and construction of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land which jeopardized the two-State solution," he said.

47. Mr. Muqqat added that the Arab Peace Initiative adopted in 2002 had been the most balanced effort thus far to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Quartet's declarations were clear about the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in that they called for negotiations to lead to an agreement between the parties within 24 months and result in the creation of a Palestinian State. Latin America had followed those developments with interest. In recognizing the State of Palestine, Latin America had tried to respect international law and the integrity of a future State of Palestine. He expressed hope that Palestine would become a United Nations Member State by September 2011.
48. **John Whitbeck**, a Paris-based international lawyer, said it was important to recognize the distinction between the existence of a State and the diplomatic recognition of a State by other States. Diplomatic recognition was fundamentally a political issue, since no State could be compelled to recognize another or be prevented from doing so. Palestine, currently recognized by 112 other States, clearly qualified as a State under the criteria set forth in the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, as did Kosovo and Western Sahara. Israel, on the other hand, actually did not qualify as a State under the Convention's criteria since it had consciously chosen never to define its territory and borders, knowing that doing so would necessarily place limits on itself. While Israel had formally annexed East Jerusalem and an arc of surrounding territory – which had not been recognized by any other State – it had for 44 years refrained from asserting sovereignty over any other part of the West Bank or Gaza, an act which would raise awkward questions about the rights, or lack thereof, of those who lived there. Since November 1988, when Palestinian statehood had been proclaimed, the only State asserting sovereignty over those parts of Palestine conquered by Israel in 1967 had been Palestine itself. Therefore, its sovereignty claim was literally and legally uncontested, even if not yet universally recognized.
49. Mr. Whitbeck noted that some 100 States had promptly recognized the State of Palestine when it declared independence in 1988. But then and several years afterwards, it had been legally challenging to make the argument that Palestine met the customary international law criterion for "effective control over the State's territory and population". By agreeing to "autonomy" or "self-Government", the Palestinians had consigned the State of Palestine to a "dark closet". On the bright side, the Oslo peace process gave rise to the Palestinian Authority, which began building institutions for a future Palestinian State. "Under both the criteria of the Montevideo Convention and the more restrictive criteria of recent customary international law, the State of Palestine exists – now. Its existence does not require Israeli consent or American recognition. It is a reality which must no longer be ignored," he said. Many long-time friends of Palestine had concluded in recent years that a two-State solution was no longer conceivable and that Palestinians should opt instead for non-violent resistance. But the recent strategic decision of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah to break free from the so-called "peace process", which had been manipulated to perpetuate "process" and prevent peace, and to rely instead on the United Nations, international law and support from people worldwide, had changed that calculation.
50. Mr. Whitbeck said that seven of the nine South American nations that had formally recognized the State of Palestine since December had explicitly done so along the 1967 borders. If Palestine were to become a United Nations Member State, the end of the occupation and peace with some measure of justice would become a question of "when", not "whether." "The current Palestinian strategy offers the last, best hope of making the two-State solution a reality," he said, adding that "decent people everywhere should do everything in their power over the next six months to make this last-chance strategy succeed." A huge debt of gratitude would be owed South America, which had given the strategy credibility, momentum and hope.
51. **Carlos Luján**, Director of the Artigas Institute, the Uruguayan Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy in Montevideo, said that, if we looked forward to the future, as much as we normally looked to the past, we might see that, while States would continue to be the world's main international political actors, they would co-exist with other economic and political structures that were also emerging as strong players on the global stage. In that context, he speculated on possible future forms of co-existence, including: groupings of civilizations, as envisioned by American political scientist Samuel Huntington; strategic regional blocs; and societies influenced by the rise of corporations.
52. Regarding the first article of the Montevideo Convention, which states that a State should possess a defined territory, Mr. Luján noted that the State of Palestine would be weakened if it comprised a set of territories that were not strongly interwoven economically. Regarding Article 3, which states "The political existence of the State is independent of recognition by the other States", he noted that States did not disappear if no other countries recognized them. Nevertheless, such recognition conferred a degree of political legitimacy. In that regard, he stressed that the wide-scale recognition of the State of Palestine by a number of Governments was politically important. Regarding article 10, which focuses on the need to resolve conflicts peacefully, he said that sentiment was shared throughout the world in theory, although it was not always put into practice.
53. Mr. Luján said that all peoples should have the right to self-determination and a choice of Government. However, that process was often marred by challenges concerning human rights and the principle of non-intervention. Negotiations must be part of a cumulative process that built confidence and trust and led to cooperation among different players. He added that Uruguay, and not just superpowers, had something to say about international law and international values. In that regard, the decisions by Latin American countries over the last few months to recognize the State of Palestine were a step in the right direction, and he expressed hope that they would lead to a two-State solution. The Montevideo Convention established a series of elements that created a road map for future work, and it was important to bear in mind the consequences for Palestine and other countries in the Middle East.
54. **Lourdes Cervantes Vásquez**, Head of the Political Department of the Havana-based Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, said it was important to recall the goals and principles of the United Nations, particularly in light of the mockery that some countries had made of them. To end the growing Palestinian tragedy, it was necessary to strictly apply international law and to respect multilateralism. Israel had categorically violated United Nations resolutions that had called for a final resolution to the question of Palestine. The only resolution it had abided by was the one that created the State of Israel. The Security Council must break its silence and fulfil its responsibility in the region, instead of continuing to protect Israel. She stressed the urgency of a two-State solution. But for that to become a reality, Israel must fully comply with its responsibility under international law, including honouring the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the separation wall and the right of the Palestinians to establish East Jerusalem as the capital of their future State. Palestinians suffered increasing hardships caused by the growth of Israeli settlements, eviction of Palestinians from their homes, human rights abuses and the collapse of the Palestinian economy.
55. Ms. Cervantes said that, during its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly had adopted 10 resolutions and its Fourth Committee (Decolonization) had adopted four on the question of Palestine. That illustrated the international community's recognition of the need to resolve the issue justly and swiftly. Israel had attempted to demonize the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people. But the fight for Palestinian rights could not and should not be abandoned. Several Latin American and Caribbean countries, particularly Cuba, had become more active on that cause, showing solidarity with the Palestinian people. Their recent recognition of the State of Palestine would help further the goal of making Palestine a full United Nations Member State.

56. Ms. Cervantes added that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not just a border conflict or a subregional conflict. “It is a conflict clearly in the axis of North-South confrontation,” she said, calling it a symbol of colonialism. In that regard, several Latin American countries were involved in a process that challenged the hegemony of power centres in the North. There was a strong link between the Palestinians and the people of the Americas, who wanted the same emancipation and social justice for the Palestinians as they wished for themselves. In the last decade, Latin American countries had tried to position themselves strategically, both politically and economically, to advance the Palestinian cause.

57. **Bruno Stagno Ugarte**, Managing Consultant of Stagno Ugarte Consultores y Asociados-Inteliaxis, and Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, said that in 1947, Costa Rica had supported General Assembly resolution 181 on the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine. Since then, there had been tragedy after tragedy, including wars, intifadas, and murders that had seriously affected the rights of Israelis and Palestinians. Peace remained elusive, while double standards and foreign intervention reigned. He noted that many States that had become Member States of the United Nations had possessed territories and populations that were well below that of the Palestinians and that were less prepared to govern themselves.

58. Mr. Stagno said that after several decades of accepting mandates and patiently supporting the Quartet road map, Costa Rica decided on 5 February 2008 to officially recognize the State of Palestine based on resolution 181 and the fact that Palestine fulfilled the basic criteria of a State according to the Montevideo Convention. “It was time to put an end to the cruel irony of denying the existence of one of the few democratic Arab States,” he said. But Costa Rica had also been motivated by the belief that it could make a difference. In the Quartet, the United States and the Russian Federation were trying to find common ground, while the European Union had hardly defined a common position. The United Nations did not know whether to follow the General Assembly’s resolutions or the ones of the Security Council, which had been based on vetoes and silence. As the Security Council was no longer fulfilling the Charter and the Quartet was ineffectual, Costa Rica had decided to act unilaterally.

59. While the case for Palestine was much more just, many Western States decided instead to recognize the State of Kosovo without even the Security Council’s approval, Mr. Stagno said. Those same States were still determined to impose obstacles for the Palestinians. Two weeks before recognizing Kosovo, Costa Rica had recognized the State of Palestine based on the responsibility to protect. Since then, many Latin American countries had followed suit. Eighteen months after Costa Rica’s move, he and the then Costa Rican President Oscar Arias had met with their Israeli counterparts in Israel, but had never discussed Costa Rica’s recognition of Palestine. “We are in a graveyard of lost opportunity in a region full of history,” he said. But the winds of freedom and dignity were blowing in North Africa and the Middle East. Now was the time to fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

60. **Hannah Yousef Emile Safieh**, General Secretary of the Brazil-based Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean, said the Arab world had suffered from stagnation for several decades and a crisis of regimes. It had become a negligible quantity in the contemporary international power hierarchy. Foreign countries found no political interest or advantage in befriending the Arab world. But the “Arab spring” of democratic reform now sweeping the region could only benefit the Palestinian people, because legitimately-elected and accountable Arab Governments would be more supportive of Palestinian aspirations. The peace process had become a farce because the process itself had endured instead of peace. The major flaw was that too much was left to local belligerent parties to sort things out in direct negotiations, as if there were no international law or United Nations resolutions to serve as terms of reference. The diplomatic deadlock was not due to Arab countries’ rejection of Israel’s existence, but to Israel’s rejection of the Arabs because of its expansionist territorial appetite. What was lacking today was the political will to implement the peace process. “The parties have negotiated ‘ad nauseum’ and now we should seek peace without further negotiations,” he said.

61. “In international relations, in matters of war and peace, the international will should prevail over a national whim,” Mr. Safieh said. The Palestinians had fully respected their commitments. The international community must respond in kind. The Quartet, however, had not succeeded, he said, calling for new States to be added to the Quartet or for bringing the issue back to the Security Council or General Assembly in order for them to dictate what should be done by the local parties.

62. Mr. Safieh said that Latin American and Caribbean countries had played a crucial role in approving General Assembly resolution 181 (1947). A considerable number of Palestinian refugees had settled in Latin America since then and had become a dynamic social, economic and political force throughout the region. Today, more than 500,000 Latin Americans were of Palestinian heritage. Latin American countries, particularly new economic powerhouses like Brazil, had emerged as strong international players, particularly concerning the question of Palestine. The Quartet should be opened to membership from emerging countries like Brazil, India, China, Turkey and South Africa. The Security Council must also be reformed.

C. Plenary III

The role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict

63. The speakers in plenary III addressed the following sub-themes: “The role of parliamentarians”; “Civil society initiatives and media engagement in the region”; and “The voice of Arab and Jewish communities in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

64. **Paula Cecilia Merchán**, a Member of the Argentine Parliament and Vice-President of the Parliamentary Group of Friendship with Palestine, noted that Argentina was a product of Spanish colonialism and had experienced the pain of human rights abuses and mass disappearances during the 1970s. She also spoke of the indigenous people of Argentina and what they had endured, stressing that it was necessary to look at history with a critical eye. In that sense, and as an Argentine, she identified with Palestinian hardship and the Palestinian peoples’ just fight for self-determination and a State of their own.

65. Ms. Merchán said that the ongoing injustices and violations against the Palestinians, among them the creation of Israeli settlements and the separation wall, the demolition of Palestinian homes, and human rights abuses, should be denounced, as they were “totally unacceptable.” She added that the search for justice should guide the international community’s actions, as justice was necessary for peace. Referring to one of the present Meeting’s speakers, Meir Margalit, she said she was heartened by the struggle of her Israeli brothers and sisters for justice and peace in Israel and Palestine.

66. Ms. Merchán noted that, last year, the MERCOSUR had discussed a free trade agreement with Israel. When the treaty reached the Argentine

Parliament, after being approved by all other parliaments and executive branches in MERCOSUR, a motion was put forward to stall its approval. In the end, the agreement remained stalled for nine months. Last week, however, although society at large believed the agreement would harm the Palestinians, the accord had been approved, with only eight Argentine parliamentarians, including herself, opposing it. Noting Israel's intimate relations with the United States, she said that Latin Americans had to consider their own sovereignty and determine what worked for them, taking into account violations committed by Israel. Agreeing to a free trade agreement did not excuse Israel of its responsibility for its breaches of international law and human rights violations.

67. **Constanza Moreira**, an Uruguayan Senator, said Uruguay's formal recognition of the State of Palestine showed its commitment to the Palestinian people and reinforced their bonds of friendship. The Uruguayan Government believed that recognition of the State of Palestine was a prerequisite for peace and for advancing the peace process. The Ecuadorian Government, based on the same premise, had recognized the State of Palestine in December 2010, as had the Argentine Government, followed by the Uruguayan Government that year. The Brazilian Government had gone beyond simple recognition by stressing that the State of Palestine should be geographically cohesive and economically viable. Sandwiched between two larger, powerful States, Uruguay understood what it was like to gain independence at a late date and to fight for rights and basic freedoms that others had long forgotten.

68. Ms. Moreira added that, while elsewhere people were fighting for the right to water, housing and education, the Palestinian people were fighting not only for those rights but also for such basic civil and political rights as the ability to move freely and have the right to property. Uruguay, which had in the past been referred to as a diaspora nation, understood very well the Palestinians' right of return. In addressing that right, it was important to register the number of Palestinian homes destroyed and property lost, and to openly support the self-determination of the Palestinian people. "We must persuade the world that the fight has not ended," she said, calling for an end to the occupation, to Israeli settlements and discrimination.

69. **Arlene Elizabeth Clemesha**, Professor of Arab Culture at the University of São Paulo and Director of International Relations at the São Paulo-based Institute for Arab Culture, said the media tended to follow certain scripts, which were shared cultural views rooted in literature and the arts. Once ingrained in society, it was difficult to change such scripts. In that regard, it was important to consistently analyze the way the Latin American media treated Palestinians, which tended to be discriminatory. For example, the press had only begun to use the word "occupation" and to describe the status of the Palestinians within the context of that occupation. The press also tended to treat the conflict as if it involved two equal parties fighting over some land, as if it were only a question of borders, while the Palestinians' entire struggle for self-determination was ignored. Regarding academia, the University of São Paulo, which was the second largest university in Latin America, had not, until recently, even taught Arab philosophy and history.

70. Ms. Clemesha said that, in the media, there was a tendency to blame the victims - the Palestinians - for not wanting peace, and for the political division between Hamas and Fatah, while ignoring the West's boycott of the Palestinian democratic elections that had brought Hamas to power. The Palestinians were blamed for all violence, and the media gave more coverage to violence from Palestinians than to violence from Israelis, portraying Israeli violence as a response to Palestinian attacks. She said that students should be able to learn about the "nakba" as an example of ethnic cleansing, and she noted that at a recent symposium at her university, in a segment devoted to ethnic cleansing, students had brought up the "nakba" on their own, although it had not officially been on the programme. That showed that today's university students were tending not to accept the general script that the media was offering.

71. Ms. Clemesha said it was important to speak to the Governments in Latin America, since Latin American media tended to follow governmental discourse. It was also necessary to have more engagement from Palestinian officials with the press. Although we were far from an ideal situation, she noted that, during Israel's 2009 invasion of Gaza, the media had treated the subject in a more realistic way since "the reality was so crude and evident". Recent technological advances were also helping. For example, during the 2010 raid on the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla", a Brazilian activist had been able to use Facebook to get in touch with the Brazilian Government, which led to her story being told in the media. Before concluding, Ms. Clemesha screened a programme on Palestinian history that the Brazilian television network, Rede Globo, had posted on its website, to educate its viewers. Such initiatives were crucial, Ms. Clemesha said.

72. **Tilda Rabi**, President of the Buenos Aires-based Federación de Entidades Argentino-Palestinas, noted that in February 1990, a United Nations Meeting on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people had been held for the first time in Argentina. In that context, she discussed the fate of the Palestinian diaspora in Argentina. Israel was turning the Palestinians into martyrs and people fighting a holy war they had not asked for. The question of Palestine was just as important for the Palestinian diaspora as for the Palestinians. More than being a question, it was a political and humanitarian cause.

73. Ms. Rabi said that her organization had worked with the Federation of Jewish Entities in Argentina to recognize and promote the establishment of a PLO representation in Buenos Aires in 1983. But Argentina's established Jewish business and political community had aggressively boycotted those efforts. Nevertheless, the two organizations continued their advocacy. She noted that her organization had attempted to establish ties with Zionist organizations in Argentina, but had been disappointed by the response. While Argentina opposed the tragic Israeli massacre of Palestinians in Gaza in 2009, the Zionists in Argentina sided more with Israel than with the values of their own democracy. Zionists should at least engage in constructive self-criticism.

74. Ms. Rabi added that Israel, which had just signed a free trade agreement with MERCOSUR, would continue to act with impunity. In that regard, Latin America should boycott Israeli products, and the Palestinian diaspora in Argentina should boycott all cultural, academic and other relations with Israel. It was important to express solidarity with the Palestinians. In addition, Israel must comply with every United Nations resolution on the question of Palestine, immediately withdraw from all Palestinian territory and remove its separation wall. The international community must no longer remain silent. Such silence was equivalent to complicity.

75. **Edward Kaufman**, Professor of the International School at the University of Haifa, voiced support for the steps that Latin American Governments had taken to recognize the State of Palestine. Such recognition was in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 181 and would bring peace. Israeli patriots understood that recognizing the State of Palestine would lead to a win-win situation for both Israelis and Palestinians.

76. Mr. Kaufman questioned whether the Jewish and Arab diasporas in Latin America were more part of the problem than the solution, as they tended to hold extreme positions because of their great love for their homelands. For example, the Jewish lobby in the United States had pressured

United States President Barack Obama to veto a recent Security Council resolution on Israeli settlements. Similarly, an Arab pacifist recently attempting to build an Islamic centre near the fallen World Trade Centre in New York had met strong resistance. The interaction between the Jewish community in the United States and the Jewish population in Israel needed to entail a sense of shared responsibility. It was easier for a member of a diaspora to be highly passionate and extremist than someone living and breathing a conflict on a daily basis.

77. Mr. Kaufman added that, to change that situation, and make diasporas part of the solution, civil society had to be more balanced. For every 10 non-governmental organizations advocating for one cause, there must be one non-governmental organization advocating for a bridge to link them. It was necessary to work together to build bridges to encourage people to embrace more moderate views. The Arab and Jewish communities must mobilize to live together in peace. The more Israelis participated in issues of concern to Arab communities, the greater the chance for peace. Additionally, each side would do well by publicly addressing the suffering of the other.

IV. Closing session

78. **Oumar Daou**, Rapporteur of the Meeting, introduced the Concluding statement by the Organizers of the Meeting (see annex I).

79. **José Luis Cancela**, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations, spoke on behalf of the host Government and highlighted important issues and key factors that linked Latin America and Palestine. He was proud of Latin America's role in 1947, when General Assembly resolution 181 had been adopted, and of its contribution to promote a two-State solution. He was also proud of the 1933 Montevideo Convention and its contribution to international law and to finding a peaceful, lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the Meeting, speakers had referred to the need to promote democracy, freedom, dignity and tolerance in the Middle East and had made Latin Americans think about their own processes and sacred values, and how they shared them with Arab populations.

80. Mr. Cancela emphasized that, as tolerance became increasingly important to build peace among nations and peoples, the international community must consistently promote full respect for all values, including for the Palestinians. "We are not asking for the others less than what we ask for ourselves," he said. As the host country, Uruguay had aimed to offer a framework for a frank, constructive discussion on how Latin America and the rest of the international community could contribute positively to advancing the peace process. Many ideas had been presented during the Meeting towards that end. It was important to follow them up as they complemented the Palestinian Authority's so-called "Fayyad plan". He expressed hope that all stakeholders would contribute to the prompt resumption of the peace process so that the State of Palestine could be fully recognized by September.

81. **Riyad Mansour**, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, noted that the recognition by all South American countries, except Colombia, of the State of Palestine had been the result of a collective effort by political parties, trade unions, women's groups, students and many others that desired justice for the Palestinians. It was the end result of people understanding and working towards the value of justice. "In Arab countries, we are on the eve of what you started more than 20 years ago," he said to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, stressing that the Palestinians expected bigger things from the Arab world, where the forces of free political parties, elections, and a fairer distribution of wealth were unfolding. The question of Palestine was the core question in the region, and the process of finding a solution to it was clear to everyone. He said that, in 1947, the international community had taken it upon itself to be involved in the question of Palestine. That is why it remained a matter of international concern, despite claims by some that it was an issue to be dealt with exclusively by Israelis and Palestinians. Already, 112 countries had recognized the State of Palestine. He called on the rest to do the same as an "investment in peace", with the goal of creating a Palestinian State by September 2011.

82. Mr. Mansour said that all walks of Palestinian society were working to end the occupation. Before the recent civilian uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, Palestinians had embarked on the first intifada. "We were able to do it then, and we are able to do it now," he said. Remarkably, Palestinians had been able to rise above the hardship they suffered due to Israeli settlements, a separation wall, the blockade of Gaza, endless human rights abuses and many other injustices. They were ahead of schedule in completing the two-year Palestinian State-building plan, slated for completion in September. Now a way must be found to end the tragic division between Fatah and Hamas. The Palestinians were ready and willing to return to the negotiating table, he said. However, "we are not going to wait until the Israelis make up their own minds and say they are ready to reach peace with us," he said. "We don't need permission to exercise our national and sovereign right to independence." Palestinians would never accept that they had to negotiate their independence with Israelis. Rather, they would negotiate issues concerning borders, security, settlements, refugees, water and the status of Jerusalem.

83. Mr. Mansour expressed hope that by the summer, 130 to 140 countries would have recognized the State of Palestine. "If the Israelis don't want to negotiate a peace, we will do it with you," he said, noting that more than 100 United Nations Member States had already recognized the State of Palestine based on the need for a two-State solution. The real work, however, was starting now, and Member States must push in the Security Council and the General Assembly for a resolution on the creation of Palestine.

84. **Zahir Tanin**, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, thanked Israeli and Palestinian participants who had travelled so far to attend the present Meeting, especially since it was important to foster open, candid dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Such interactions built trust between the two sides and would help lay the foundation for two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. He added that, as September, the target month for completing the Palestinian Authority's two-year State-building programme, was fast approaching, strong support from Latin America and the Caribbean would continue to constitute an important contribution.

1. The **United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace** was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Montevideo on 29 and 30 March 2011. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian experts, representatives of United Nations Members States and observers, parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the media.
2. The objective of the Meeting, at this time of continued efforts at restarting the Israeli-Palestinian political process, was to encourage broad international action, including by Latin American and Caribbean States, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and for achieving a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Meeting, among other things, looked at obstacles and opportunities on the road to achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It examined support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Meeting also discussed the role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict.
3. The Organizers and the participants appreciated the opening remarks by the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, H. E. Mr. Luis Almagro, and associated themselves with his call for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the recognition of the State of Palestine. They welcomed the message by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his principled position on the illegality of the settlements, his call for ceasing all settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and his pledge to support the efforts at achieving a two-State solution. The Organizers shared the assessment of the Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Saeb Erakat, who, in his keynote presentation, had stressed that there was no alternative to the two-State solution. A just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was of critical global interest and constituted an important element for stability and prosperity in the Middle East.
4. The Organizers shared the utmost concern expressed by many participants about the alarming escalation of violence on the ground. They strongly condemn the killing and wounding of Palestinian civilians, including children, by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip. They also reiterated their condemnation of rocket fire from Gaza, against civilian targets in southern Israel and attacks on Israeli civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The impasse in the political process exacerbates the desperation of the Palestinian people and provides a fertile ground for extremists on both sides. The recent surge of violence also threatens to undermine the achievements made so far in Palestinian institution- and State-building.
5. The Organizers shared the assessment made by participants that the current dramatic developments in the wider region of the Middle East and North Africa added to the need to redouble efforts to break the deadlock between Israelis and Palestinians. In this connection, they felt strongly that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be anchored in the principles of international law, as force and unilateral steps would not bring peace.
6. The Organizers were encouraged by the consensual view among participants that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was imperative for the attainment of peace and stability in the entire region of the Middle East. They expressed serious concern about the prolonged stagnation and impasse of the peace efforts between the Israelis and Palestinians. The Organizers reiterated their full support for the speedy revival of the Middle East peace process, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet's Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The Organizers also appreciated that the participants had stated their firm support for ending Israeli occupation in order to achieve a permanent two-State solution, in which Israel and Palestine would live side by side in peace and security within mutually recognized borders. The Organizers joined the participants in urging the parties to resume, without delay, serious negotiations that would lead, within an agreed time frame, to the resolution of the permanent status issues: borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, water and security. They also urged the release of all Palestinian political prisoners currently held in Israeli prisons and detention facilities.
7. The Organizers reiterated the global consensus on the illegality of settlements and shared the serious concern expressed by participants about Israel's resumption of these illegal policies and practices, thus rendering the continuation of permanent status negotiations meaningless. They were alarmed by Israel's ongoing policy in East Jerusalem, which aimed at altering the legal status of the city and its physical, demographic and cultural character. They condemned the illegal expansion and consolidation of Israeli settlements in and around East Jerusalem, as well as the illegal and provocative measures against Palestinian residents, including house demolitions, evictions, land confiscation and residency rights revocations. The Organizers noted that the vast majority of United Nations Member States, including this Committee, considered that all settlements were illegal, including the so-called "natural growth" settlements, and had to be halted immediately. The Organizers also stressed that the construction of settlements and the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constituted a clear violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions. Alarm was expressed at the rising number of acts of violence and brutality committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, the widespread destruction of public and private Palestinian property and infrastructure, and the internal displacement of civilians. A complete and immediate cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was imperative and would positively contribute to creating a political climate conducive to advancing the negotiations. The Organizers support the firm stance by the international community not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to occupied East Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.
8. It was acknowledged that Jerusalem, sacred for Christians, Jews and Muslims worldwide, represented the common heritage of all humanity, and, therefore, Israeli actions with regard to the city's holy places were totally unacceptable. The Organizers fully agreed with the participants that a negotiated agreement on the status of Jerusalem should take into full account the political and religious concerns of all inhabitants of the Holy City. Such an agreement should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of the city's inhabitants, as well as the permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by peoples of all religions and nationalities. The Organizers also reiterated that any agreement that did not include East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian State would not lead to sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace.
9. Speakers at the Meeting deplored the lack of any appreciable improvement in the humanitarian, economic and social situation in the Gaza Strip. Due to the continued blockage by Israel of materials vitally needed for reconstruction efforts, three quarters of the damage inflicted on buildings and infrastructure during the Israeli military offensive on Gaza remained in a state of disrepair. Water and sanitation infrastructure was nearing collapse. The continued suffocation of Gaza's economy due to the blockade provided a fertile ground for extremists and militants leading to the recent escalation of rocket and mortar fire from the Strip. Speakers called for the immediate lifting by the Israeli Government of the blockade against the Gaza Strip, as well as for halting all rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza at Israeli targets.

10. A number of participants had drawn attention to the plight of Palestine refugees, whose status and suffering had been passed down from generation to generation over the past six decades. The inherent vulnerability of the refugees and the dire conditions of their exile called for a just and lasting solution based on the principles of international law and the lessons drawn from successful examples of conflict resolution in other parts of the world. The Organizers supported the view that justice for Palestine refugees and the Palestinian people as a whole also encompassed fair recompense and recourse for the wrongs inflicted upon them under occupation.

11. The Organizers supported the participants' argument that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in particular the question of Palestine, which is at its core, was an urgent international imperative and that all States and regions had an interest in securing a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the other members of the world community, had a crucial role to play in enlarging the international constituency in support of Middle East peace and bringing additional actors into the peacemaking process. In that regard, the Organizers joined the participants in welcoming the recent wave of formal recognition of the State of Palestine by Latin American and Caribbean countries in its 1967 borders. These important steps constituted a powerful resolve by the countries of this region to engage more directly in Middle East peacemaking and widen the number of international stakeholders in support of a two-State solution.

12. The Organizers took note of the signing on 29 March 2011 of a protocol establishing diplomatic relations between Uruguay and the State of Palestine. They were gratified that the signing of this important bilateral document coincided with the holding of the United Nations Meeting in Montevideo devoted to realizing Palestinian Statehood and achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace.

13. It was noted that 112 countries had already recognized Palestine as a State, with the majority extending their recognition following the November 1988 Declaration of Statehood by the Palestinian National Council. The Organizers expressed full support for Palestine's diplomatic initiative and considered that the entire international community should be ready to recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, including through a Security Council resolution at an appropriate time during the 65th session of the General Assembly in 2011. The Organizers called upon those countries of the region and beyond that have not done so to seriously consider recognizing the State of Palestine in the 1967 borders and to play a constructive role in promoting peace in the Middle East. They should also actively support the institution- and State-building programme of the Palestinian Authority to prepare the institutional, economic and infrastructural framework of the future Palestinian State. This would require significant international political, technical and financial support. Latin American and Caribbean countries, their public and civil society institutions could join other global actors in helping lay the foundation of a future sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State. The Organizers extend this call to the entire international donor community, urging it to continue to provide generous support for the Palestinian efforts at rehabilitation, reconstruction, economic development and State-building.

14. The Organizers reiterated that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, based on international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. Participants underlined that a crucial and indispensable condition for achieving a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They also urged the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to strive and work for national reconciliation as an essential condition for achieving a lasting solution of the question of Palestine and the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State. They commend President Mahmoud Abbas for his principled leadership in all efforts to bring about a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with international legitimacy.

15. The Organizers would like to join participants in commending the work of civil society organizations aimed at supporting Israelis and Palestinians in their quest for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict. They acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the dedicated work of Latin American and Caribbean organizations in support of the Palestinian people, by implementing specific projects in the West Bank or aiming to overcome the Gaza blockade to bring humanitarian aid to those in desperate need. The Meeting was apprised of the initiative of The Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress in Costa Rica and the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development in the Dominican Republic for promoting concrete action by stakeholders in the Latin American and Caribbean region in support of Middle East peace and encouraged these and other organization to continue their important work.

16. The Organizers wish to acknowledge that numerous speakers in their presentations commended the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing international events, such as this one in Montevideo, contributing to raising international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilizing Governments and public opinion worldwide in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

17. The Organizers, on behalf of the participants, expressed their appreciation for the important initiative of the Government of Uruguay, to invite the Committee to convene this Meeting in its capital, which constitutes a concrete step in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in championing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They noted that the contribution of Uruguay and other players in the region and beyond was crucial to achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians and for bringing stability to the Middle East. They also expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Uruguay and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs for hosting the Meeting, for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation, and for the generous hospitality extended to them.

Annex II

List of participants

SPEAKERS

Ms. Lourdes Cervantes Vásquez

Head, Political Department, Organization for the Solidarity
of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America
Havana

Ms. Arlene Elizabeth Clemesha
Professor of Arab Culture, University of São Paulo
Director of International Relations, Institute for Arab Culture
São Paulo

Mr. Marcelo Díaz
Member of the Chilean Parliament
Valparaíso

Mr. Saeb Erakat
Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization
Ramallah

Mr. Edward (Edy) Kaufman
Professor, International School, University of Haifa
Haifa

Ms. Hind Khoury
Former Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, Palestinian Authority
Jerusalem

Mr. Carlos Luján
Director, Artigas Institute
Montevideo

Mr. Meir Margalit
Member, Municipal Council of the City of Jerusalem
Jerusalem

Mr. Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy
Senator, Federal Senate of Brazil
Brasília

Ms. Paula Cecilia Merchán
Member of the Argentine Parliament
Buenos Aires

Ms. Constanza Moreira
Senator, Senate of Uruguay
Montevideo

H.E. Mr. Walid Muaqqat
Ambassador, Palestinian Embassy in Argentina
Buenos Aires

Mr. Yariv Oppenheimer
Director-General, Peace Now
Tel Aviv

Ms. Tilda Rabi
President, Federación de Entidades Argentino-Palestinas
Buenos Aires

Mr. Hanna Yousef Emile Safieh
General Secretary of the Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean
Natal

Mr. Bruno Stagno Ugarte
Managing Consultant, Stagno Ugarte Consultores y Asociados-Inteliaxis
Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica
Former Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations
San José

Mr. John V. Whitbeck
International lawyer
Paris

SPEAKERS

UNITED NATIONS MEETING OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mr. Abdallah Abu Rahma
Head, Popular Committee Against the Wall
Bil'in, Ramallah

Mr. Pedro Armengol
Executive Director, Central Única dos Trabalhadores
(Unified Workers' Central)
Brasilia

Ms. Elisenda Ballesté
Professor; Director, Bachelor in International Relations Programme
Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education
Puebla, Mexico

Mr. Pedro Brieger
Journalist and sociologist
Buenos Aires

Mr. Mario Casartelli
Journalist and writer
Asuncion

Mr. Ruben Elías
President, Comisión de Apoyo al Pueblo Palestino-Uruguay
Montevideo

Mr. Juan Raúl Ferreira
President, Uruguay-Israel Friendship Association
Montevideo

Ms. Lina María Eraso Quintero
Project Director, Centro de Colaboración Cívica
Mexico City

Mr. Pablo Lumerman
Director, Fundación Cambio Democrático
Buenos Aires

DELEGATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chair of the Committee and Head of Delegation

H.E. Mr. Zahir Tanin Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Vice-Chair of the Committee

H.E. Mrs. Carmen Zilia Pérez Mazón
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European Union
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EU Delegation in Uruguay

MERCOSUR (Secretariat)
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Montevideo

Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) and Finance
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Montevideo

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Montevideo

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