



Press Release

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SPEAKERS IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY EMERGENCY SESSION CONDEMN ISRAEL'S CONSTRUCTION

OF 'SECURITY BARRIER', EXPANSIONIST POLICIES

Following the Security Council's failure to act last week regarding the security barrier being built by Israel in the West Bank, the General Assembly met this afternoon, at the request of Arab nations, to consider a resolution declaring the barrier illegal.

The League of Arab States had also decided to ask the 191-nation Assembly to approve a second measure seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on whether Israel is legally obligated as an occupying Power to dismantle the barrier. The Hague-based Court – created under the United Nations Charter in 1945 – adjudicates disputes between countries.

The Assembly resumed its tenth emergency session on illegal Israeli activities in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied territories to address what the Arab League called "the grave issue of Israel's expansionist wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem". After hearing from 18 speakers, the sponsors of the two texts requested more time, and a vote is expected in the Assembly tomorrow afternoon.

Last week, the United States vetoed a draft resolution that would have had the Security Council declare illegal the construction by Israel, the occupying Power, of a wall in the occupied territories departing from the Armistice Line of 1949. The text, which the United States said was one-sided, was defeated by a vote of 10 in favour, to 1 against, with 4 abstentions (Bulgaria, Cameroon, Germany and United Kingdom).

Opening the meeting today, the Observer of Palestine said Israel was committing an "immense war" against the Palestinians, as it built an expansionist wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The construction had not only involved the confiscation of Palestinian lands, but the destruction of Palestinian livelihoods, and the illegal, de facto annexation of expansive areas of occupied Palestinian land.

"This matter is thus of extreme importance", he said. "It is about our national existence and peace in the region. It is either the wall or the 'Road Map' ... It is impossible to have both." He said Israel's claim that the wall was a security measure to prevent suicide bombings was incredulous – "repetition of the same lie that had been used by Israel over the years to commit all its crimes against the Palestinian people".

Israel's representative responded that the need to establish a security barrier was the product of the continuing Palestinian strategy to encourage and tolerate terrorism, which had cost hundreds of innocent lives and threatened thousands more. There was no change in the ownership of the territory and compensation was provided for the use of land, crop yield and any other damage caused.

The fence had no political significance, he added, stressing that its sole purpose was as a life-saving measure to protect Israeli citizens from terrorism. Israel remained fully committed to negotiating the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and would be ready and willing to dismantle the fence or alter its route, as required in the context of a political settlement reached through bona fide negotiations.

Most speakers condemned the construction of the barrier, and called for an end to what they felt were Israel's expansionist policies. Several wondered why the wall's route deviated from the so-called "green line" established under the 1949 Armistice. Most maintained that the barrier would create a major obstacle to the implementation of the Quartet-backed Road Map, which calls for a series of parallel and reciprocal steps by both sides, leading to two States living side by side in peace by 2005.

The representative of Malaysia, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said the "unfortunate" veto in the Council did not bode well for future progress towards a comprehensive peace. The crux of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict was not terrorism but the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel. The Israeli expansionist wall was not justified as a measure to protect against terrorist attacks targeted at Israeli civilians.

Increasing tensions in the Middle East had seriously damaged the efforts for a peaceful settlement, said the representative of the Russian Federation, a member of the diplomatic Quartet, along with the United Nations, the United States and the European Union. More energetic actions by the international community were required to prevent the worst scenario. While condemning unilateral action in the occupied territories, he stressed that the immediate task was the earliest possible implementation of the Road Map, and both Palestinians and Israelis should forgo actions, which contradicted its spirit.

Also addressing the emergency session were the representatives of Syria (on behalf of the League of Arab States), Afghanistan (as Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People), South Africa, Indonesia, Iran, Cuba, Senegal, Pakistan, India, China, Zimbabwe, Italy (on behalf of the European Union and associated States) and the United States.

The representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) also spoke.

The Assembly will resume its tenth emergency session Tuesday, 21 October, at 3 p.m.

Background

The General Assembly resumed its tenth emergency special session this afternoon to consider illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied territories, at the request of the League of Arab States.

In a letter to the Assembly President (document A/ES-10/242), the representative of Syria, on behalf of the Arab League, requested the meeting "in light of the inability of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security due to the exercise of one of its permanent members of the veto, in order to address the grave issue of Israel's expansionist wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem".

Last week, the United States vetoed a draft resolution before the Council, which would have had the 15-nation body "declare illegal the construction by Israel, the occupying Power, of a wall in the occupied territories departing from the armistice line of 1949". The text was defeated by a vote of 10 in favour, to 1 against, with 4 abstentions (Bulgaria, Cameroon, Germany, United Kingdom). That action followed the Council's daylong meeting, in which some 44 speakers raised the concerns regarding the security barrier.

Earlier this month, the Arab League called an emergency session of the Assembly following the Israeli Security Cabinet's decision to remove Yasser Arafat, whom it accuses of fomenting terrorism. But the decision did not include specific orders to move against the Palestinian leader. At that time, the Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the move, by a vote of 133 in favour, to 4 against (Israel, United States, Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia), with 15 abstentions.

The tenth emergency special session dates back to 1997 when Israel began construction of a new settlement south of East Jerusalem. The Security Council met twice on this issue, but failed to adopt resolutions. Using the "Uniting for Peace" formula, a special emergency session of the Assembly was convened in April and again in July and November of 1997. It also resumed in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001.

Statements

NASSER AI-KIDWA, Observer of Palestine, said that Israel, the occupying Power, was committing an immense war against the Palestinian people, with the magnitude of a crime against humanity, as it built an expansionist wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. That had involved the confiscation and destruction of thousands of metres of Palestinian lands, the destruction of the livelihood of tens of thousands of protected Palestinian civilians and the illegal, de facto annexation of expansive areas of occupied Palestinian land.

He said that with the building of the expansionist wall — if the international community permitted the continuation of such a crime — Israel would have effectively transferred large numbers of Palestinian civilians and would have constricted the rest of the Palestinian people in several walled "Bantustans" with additional secondary walls inside them. It would also have effectively destroyed the existence of an independent sovereign State of Palestine and the potential for achieving a political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with the two-State vision based on the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"This matter is thus of extreme importance", he said. "It is about our national existence and peace in the region. It is either the wall or the 'Road Map'. It is either the wall or peace. It is impossible to have both." In spite of the strategic and historic importance of the matter, the Security Council had failed to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security as a result of the exercise of the veto by one of its permanent members. The 14 October veto prevented the Council from adopting a binding resolution declaring the wall illegal under relevant provisions of international law, and demanding that Israel cease its construction and dismantle existing sections. That was the second veto by the same permanent member in less than a month and its twenty-seventh since 1976 on draft resolutions dealing with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The practical result of that veto was that the construction of the wall would continue with all its catastrophic results, unless the Assembly and the United Nations system did something about it.

As it cut deep into Palestinian territory, the wall, with its fortified towers, barbed wire, sensors and "no-go" areas, could lead to de facto annexation by Israel of some 105,000 dunums of Palestinian lands, he stated. Suffocating and wrecking both occupied east Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the wall had destructively impacted the lives of more than 200,000 Palestinian civilians in 65 villages and towns on both sides of the wall. Israel had claimed the building of the expansionist wall was a security measure to prevent suicide bombings. That was not only incredulous and illogical but it was a "repetition of the same lie and pretext that had been used by Israel over the years to commit all its crimes against the Palestinian people". Israel had used that same pretext for years, adding now that the measure was to deter terrorism. Naturally, all were against terrorism and there was a clear and unwavering position of the Palestinian Authority to that end.

But it must be made clear that Israeli measures had led to the bombings, not vice versa, he stated. Israel was responsible for the social ills that plagued Palestinian society and caused its people to lose all hope for the future. It was specifically responsible for the ugly phenomenon, and must not be allowed to use the battle against international terrorism as a cover for illegal policies and measures for the continuation of its occupation, settler colonialism and the obstruction of peace. Finally, he urged the Assembly to call on the International Court of Justice and request an advisory opinion on the obligations of the occupying Power with regard to the wall.

DAN GILLERMAN (Israel) said that the call for yet another emergency special session of the Assembly, in violation of the very conditions set out in the Uniting for Peace procedure, had nothing to do with the so-called failure of the Security Council to adopt a resolution last week. If there was a failure, it was on the part of the sponsors of the resolutions, both in the Council and in the Assembly today, to recognize that the issue was a conflict between two peoples, each with rights and obligations, and to refer expressly and forcefully to the obligation of the Palestinian side to cease their practice of terrorism. By trying repeatedly to oblige the Assembly to adopt one-sided texts that ignored the reality on the ground, the sponsors of the resolution had weakened the voice of the United Nations.

It was well known, he stated, that the reason no resolution had been adopted in the Council last week was that the sponsors of that draft resolution — the same resolution that had been introduced again for consideration before the Assembly — had refused to negotiate a fair and

balanced text that would properly refer to Palestinian responsibilities to end their support, encouragement and practice of terrorism. It was also well known that the Palestinian Observer had serious difficulty in accepting any reference to Palestinian responsibilities, which would expressly condemn Palestinian terrorism. When Council members had the audacity to suggest that it was appropriate for any resolution addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to refer to Palestinian obligations to fight terrorism, that alone was used as sufficient cause to convene yet another emergency special session, or to manufacture yet another piece of paper that did not move the process forward one iota.

The need to establish a security barrier, he explained, was the product of the continuing Palestinian strategy to encourage and tolerate terrorism that had costs hundreds of innocent lives and threatened thousands more. Humanitarian considerations played a decisive role in the procedure for building the fence and dictating its route, and the use of public and unused land had been the highest priority. There was no change in the ownership of the territory and compensation was provided for the use of land, crop yield and any other damage caused. Far from reducing the freedom of movement or territorial contiguity in the West Bank, the net effect of the fence would be to improve the overall humanitarian situation by allowing for a reduction of the presence of Israeli forces in Palestinian areas. The fence had no political significance, and its sole purpose was as a life-saving measure to protect Israeli citizens from terrorism. Israel remained fully committed to negotiating the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, and would be ready and willing to dismantle the fence or alter its route, as required in the context of a political settlement reached through bona fide negotiations.

Both resolutions before the Assembly today were rife with distorted language and supposed legal conclusions, he said. In seeking so clearly to prejudice the issue to be determined, the proponents of the resolutions had not only exposed their malicious intentions, but had exposed the Assembly to ridicule. The request for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice would not enhance the prospects for peace in the region, nor was it intended to do so, he said. Such cynical use of the advisory opinion procedure would set an extremely dangerous precedent and would only encourage further abuse of the Court as a political weapon. It was not only the Court that would pay the price for that ill-conceived initiative, he said. How could those resolutions possibly be consistent with the role of the United Nations as a member of the Quartet and a supporter of the Road Map? How could those resolutions help the Assembly's standing as a force against terrorism, when they ignored the calculated murder of hundreds of innocent people?

FAYSSAL MEKADAD (Syria), speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, stated that the 14 October veto in the Council had further undermined the peace process. In the past few months, the occupied Palestinian territories had become a "real battleground", in which the Israeli forces had continued their barbaric actions and illegal measures, exacerbated by the expansion of settlements and the building of the wall, which clearly contravened international law. One of the real horrors of the wall was that it separated Palestinians, on both sides of it, and would only lead to environmental and humanitarian deterioration of the people and their lands.

Why was the wall not being built along the so-called "green line", within Israeli territory? If the representative of Israel did not know the answer, then the Arab Group would say that the wall was a symbol of expansion. Would the international community, in its silence, assume that Palestinian lands were to be used by Israel as it wished? Israel must listen to reason: the wall was illegal and a violation of firm principles of international law, which prohibited the occupation of lands by force. It also contravened relevant Security Council resolutions.

He said that Israel claimed it was building the wall to combat terrorism, while it was itself conducting State terrorism, using Palestinian civilians as its targets, without any distinction between men, women and children. In Israel's logic, anyone expressing the desire for freedom was a terrorist. Indeed, everyone already knew Israel's response to international law and United Nations resolutions. The representative of that country had already expressed disdain for the action taken in the Council last week. The peace process in the Middle East was at an impasse, but, nevertheless, the Arab League would continue to work toward achieving just and genuine peace and stability in the region.

RAVAN FARHADI (Afghanistan), speaking in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories continued to deteriorate and, at the Security Council meeting last week, an overwhelming number of speakers denounced the erection of the separation wall. The Council's reluctance to take decisive measures in that respect had once again prompted a turn to the Assembly in the hope that the United Nations would shoulder its responsibilities to the Palestinian people. In some parts, the wall extended up to 6 kilometres into the West Bank, he said. During its construction, Palestinian houses had been demolished and broad swaths of land had been bulldozed or confiscated. Some 1,100 hectares of Palestinian land, which had been a good source of income, had been confiscated.

Although the wall did separate Israelis from Palestinians, it also had the tragic effect of separating Palestinians from Palestinians, he stated. On 1 October, the Israeli Government had approved the second phase of the wall's construction. Satellite images showed that 45 per cent of the water resources and 40 per cent of Palestinian land would be on the Israeli side of the wall, and the wall would institutionalize a system whereby freedom of movement would be very limited. The Committee took note of the concerns of the Israeli Government for the safety of its people, but it had still not answered the fundamental question. Why was it building that wall on land that did not belong to it, on the land of the Palestinian people? Israel's undertaking could not be justified, and the Committee called on the Government of Israel to interrupt the construction of the wall and to demolish what had already been built.

RASTAM MOHD ISA (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said he was deeply disappointed that the Council had been prevented from declaring the illegality of the Israeli expansionist wall and demanding its destruction, as well as the immediate cessation of its construction. It was unfortunate that a veto had been exercised once again in the Council. That did not bode well for future progress towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. In addition, he reiterated the Movement's condemnation of violence and terrorism, the killing of innocent civilians and the intensification of Israeli military operations against Palestinians. The crux of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict was not terrorism but the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel. The Israeli expansionist wall had been, and continued to be, constructed in the occupied Palestinian territory and was not justified as a measure to protect terrorist attacks targeted at Israeli civilians.

Reaffirming his position that the expansionist wall needed to be discontinued, he said the wall departed from the Armistice Line of 1949 and, therefore, was illegal under international law. In addition, the wall violated the Fourth Geneva Convention in that it involved the illegal annexation of Palestinian land. The wall presented a major obstacle to the implementation of the Road Map and would trigger the end of the Middle East peace process. He asked that the Assembly support the two draft resolutions before it, and said that an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israel's legal obligation to cease construction of the wall would provide an impartial pronouncement on the status of the wall's legality. Finally, he called on the Assembly to muster the necessary political will, wisdom and courage to do what was right for the people of the region. The passage of the resolution would send a powerful message to Israel, declaring the strong opposition of the international community to the construction of the wall that deviated from the Armistice Line of 1949.

DUMISANI S. KUMALO (South Africa) said that the Security Council had once again failed in its obligations regarding peace and security in the Middle East, following the veto of the resolution condemning the construction of a separation wall in Palestine. The Assembly needed to send a "clear and powerful message" against the separation wall that Israel was building in support of its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The acceleration of the wall's construction, as well as the expansion of the illegal settlements on Palestinian land, was an act of

annexation that was inconsistent with the obligations of Israel under the internationally accepted Road Map. "The settlements and the separation wall create new unacceptable facts on the ground", since they incorporated more land into Israel at the expense of the Palestinian people.

He also noted that there was a humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territory, since the "frightening levels" of violence seemed to feed from the abject poverty and alienation that Palestinians experienced every day. However, in spite of the depressing conditions in the Middle East, he was encouraged that there were Palestinians and Israelis who believed in a negotiated peaceful settlement. There were continuing attempts among both Israelis and Palestinians to renounce all forms of violence, intimidation and incitement and engage one another about the future of their people. He stressed that by debating the situation in the Middle East, the Assembly was not wasting United Nations resources or singling out Israel for unfair and endless criticism. The debate was about saving lives in the Middle East.

SUDJADNAN PARNOHADININGRAT, Secretary-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, regretted that, time and again, the Security Council had failed to force Israel to come to terms that would lead to a just and fair solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He particularly regretted the Council's failure to adopt the draft resolution on the construction of the wall, which he believed had sent the wrong message to the Israeli Government. Describing it as an illegal, de facto annexation of occupied Palestinian land, he said the construction of the wall went beyond security measures. Israel's continuing and inconsiderate policies constituted a serious threat to the Quartet's performance-based Road Map.

In that regard, he reiterated Indonesia's support for ending the conflict on the basis of the Road Map and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Also, the destination of the Road Map was a final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict between the two by 2005. That settlement, to be negotiated between the parties, should result in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. Towards that goal, he urged Israel to cease what he termed its "ill-practices", including the construction of the wall, as those actions were in contradiction with, and endangered, the Road Map. Additionally, the completed portions of the wall should be demolished. He hoped the special session of the General Assembly would adopt the resolutions before it, as their adoption would provide new grounds for the concerned parties to return to the negotiating table.

MOHAMMAD H. FADAI FARD (Iran) said the building of the wall, and the continuation of Jewish settlement building in the same occupied territory, was a further violation of international law and the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, it was a new means to achieving the Israeli goal of depriving Palestinians their inherent rights. The wall's route opened the way for the confiscation of more Palestinian territories, and amounted to a visible act of territorial annexation under the guise of security. Illegal settlements in the West Bank would benefit most from the wall, and, as such, illegal Jewish settlements were expanding parallel to the completion of the wall. The building of the wall indicated that the Israeli regime had never been serious about peace, and had sought to sabotage prospects for establishing a viable Palestinian State.

Consequences of the wall would not befall the Palestinians alone, he stated. In fact, the wall, if unchecked, would have a terrible impact on every aspect of the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East as a whole. International law had prohibited the conquest and acquisition of territory by force. The Security Council had reiterated that prohibition, and, likewise, the Fourth Geneva Convention had prohibited the alteration and annexation of occupied territories. It was, therefore, regrettable that the use of a solo veto in the Council had blocked the passage of a draft resolution, which would have asked the Israelis to stop building the wall. Lastly, it was unacceptable that the Council continued to be paralyzed about a grave crisis which was at the top of international priorities.

BRUNO RODRIGUEZ PARRILLA (Cuba) said that it was necessary to convene the emergency session as a result of a United States veto in the Council. Israel's long record of illegal occupation, violation of human rights, State terrorism, economic stranglehold, among other things, over more than five decades, had been compounded by the building of a wall on Palestinian land. International law established the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force, and the international community had refused to recognize the illegal occupation by Israel. In such cases, the reaction of the international community, expressed through the United Nations, was clear and firm. However, the annexation carried out by Israel had not been condemned with serious force.

Cuba condemned the building of the wall as a security measure, he stated, adding that even if it had been built along the green line, it would be unacceptable. The construction of the wall, along with the building of security roads and settlements, was clear expansionism by Israel. Furthermore, the building of the wall demonstrated Israel's real stance against a genuine peace process. The creation of new divisions in Palestinian territory added to the difficulty of a definitive and just end to the conflict. Violence and use of force would not lead to a solution. He reiterated his solidarity with the Arab world, and hoped for the return of occupied territories in the Syrian Golan, the end of Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip, and the return of Palestinian refugees, among other things.

CHEIKH NIANG (Senegal) said that the persistent repression of the Palestinian population by Israeli occupation forces had reached new heights with the construction of the wall, added to the massive operations of arbitrary arrests, deportations, blockades, targeted assassinations and other ongoing measures. The wall would cause the destruction of Palestinian homes and lands and put many Palestinians overnight under Israeli jurisdiction, turning them into foreigners in their own land.

The building of the wall, he continued, was an act of provocation that would revive the feelings of humiliation of the Palestinian people and destroy the climate of trust between Israelis and Palestinians. He called for a mobilization of the international community, the United Nations and the Quartet to demand that an immediate halt be called to the construction of such a wall of discord. Only a foundation of legitimacy and legality could be the basis of a lasting peace, he said. He hoped that Israel would soon make a choice to share prosperity and peace.

SERGEY LAVROV (Russian Federation) said that the increasing tensions in the Middle East had seriously damaged the efforts for a peaceful settlement. More energetic actions by the international community were required to prevent the worst scenario. He condemned all forms of violence and terror, and resolutely opposed any unilateral actions on the Palestinian territories, including the construction of a separation wall. Based on this position, he had been in favour of an adequate reaction by the Security Council to the dangerous developments in the situation in the Middle East. It was important now to incline the parties to put an immediate stop to confrontation and to resume the political process with a final goal of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

The immediate task, he stated, was the earliest possible implementation of the Road Map, and both Palestinians and Israelis should forgo actions which contradicted its spirit. During the ministerial meeting of the Quartet in New York in September, Russian Foreign Minister I.S. Ivanov had proposed to approve the Road Map in a Security Council resolution. His proposal not only remained valid, it was becoming ever more urgent. Within the next few days, his delegation intended to make practical steps to work out such a resolution, whose adoption should help efforts to implement the Road Map, which was the only option for the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

NISAR AHMED MEMON (Pakistan) said it was important for the Assembly to reflect on illegal Israeli actions, especially the construction of the

separation wall and continued settlement activities, which represented a serious challenge to efforts for peace in the Middle East. The separation wall was being built in clear violation of international law and Israel's commitments under bilateral and international agreements. Explaining that the wall did not follow the so-called green line, which in effect cut deep into Palestinian lands, he stressed that it ran contrary to the fundamental principle of international law, which deemed illegal the acquisition of territory by force. The construction of the wall was also inconsistent with Israel's obligations under the Quartet's Road Map for peace in the Middle East.

He said that the argument that the wall was necessary to fight terrorism and enhance security was untenable, and was further evidence that the war on terrorism was being misused by some to promote other objectives in their long-standing disputes. Security would not be enhanced by erecting a wall but would come by ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, which remained the root cause of tension and conflict in the Middle East. The wall was undermining the prospects of a just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and the international community had an obligation to prevent the unlawful annexation of Palestinian land. There was little doubt that the separation wall, if completed, would negate the possibility of a contiguous, viable Palestinian State. The Government of Israel must, therefore, be persuaded to cease and reverse the construction of the wall.

Mr. SHERVANI (India), commending the actions of the Palestinian Authority to quickly apprehend those involved in the recent killing of Americans in Gaza, said that recent actions on the part of Israel had not been helpful in the search for peace. He also deplored the attack by Israel on Syrian territory. Israel had a right to self-defence, but the construction of the wall could not be justified. It could be seen as an effort to predetermine the outcome of a negotiated settlement, and it would destroy dwellings and agricultural lands, separate families and aggravate an already desperate Palestinian situation. He called on Israel to cease the wall's construction.

He said that there must be no hiatus in the efforts of the international community to pursue a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The agreements of Oslo and Madrid must be built upon, through the route outlined by the Quartet's Road Map, which was the most reasonable way out of the logjam.

ZHANG YISHAN (China) deplored Israel's decision to continue building the wall and expand settlements. Israel's explanation that its action was based on security reasons was not convincing as the separation wall could not solve Israel's security problems once and for all. Instead, that would actually serve to deepen mutual hostility and hatred, thus straying farther away from the goal of peaceful co-existence among the countries in the region. The past 50 years had shown clearly that political negotiation was the only way towards long-term stability in the Middle East.

Therefore, he urged both parties to adopt a far-sighted approach to the problem, exercise restraint and take practical steps to avoid any extremist act, so that favourable conditions for lessening tensions and the resumption of peace talks were created. At the same time, he urged the international community, especially the "Quartet", to simultaneously continue and reinforce their efforts to promote peace and restart the implementation of the Road Map as quickly as possible. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China was ready to work with the rest of the international community to enhance the Middle East peace process.

BONIFACE G. CHIDYAUSIKU (Zimbabwe) hoped that the debate would assist efforts to bring peace to the Middle East and further the common agenda for peace and security. He said the Special Rapporteur's report on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories had clearly demonstrated the suffering of the Palestinian people. The situation was of grave concern to all. Daily, the international community was witnessing unacceptable levels of violence, terror and destruction of property perpetrated by Israel on innocent Palestinian women, children and men.

He recognized the right of every nation, including Israel to self-defence, but condemned the wanton and senseless killings, bombings and the abuse of military might being displayed by that country. The United Nations could not allow the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to continue unabated. He, therefore, concurred with the Rapporteur that some limit must be placed on the violation of human rights in the name of counter-terrorism. It was also important that a balance be struck between respect for human rights and the interests of security.

He was also concerned that Israel continued to construct a wall which separated it from the West Bank, in "blatant disregard" of the United Nations Charter, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention. The building of the wall, which ignored the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian people, did not assist the peace efforts but destroyed them. It also undermined the existence of an independent sovereign State of Palestine. Therefore, it was important for the United Nations and other international players to take concrete and immediate measures to ensure an end to the arrogance of power and absence of morality that the Israeli actions in the occupied territories represented. It was important to rescue the potential for achieving peace and a final settlement, based on the existence of two States — Israel and Palestine. He urged the Assembly to assist in that process.

MARCELLO SPATAFORA (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, called on Israel and Palestine to live up to the commitments they undertook at the Aqaba Summit on 4 June and urged all sides in the region to implement policies conducive to negotiations. He also emphasized that the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate its determination in the fight against extremist violence, and recognized Israel's right to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks. However, in exercising that right, Israel must exert maximum effort to avoid civilian casualties and take no action that aggravated the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people, he stressed.

He was particularly concerned by the route marked out for the so-called security fence in the occupied West Bank. The envisaged departure of the route from the green line could prejudice future negotiations and make the two-State solution physically impossible to implement. It would also cause further humanitarian and economic hardship to the Palestinians, he said. Thousands of Palestinians, west of the fence, were being cut off from essential services in the West Bank, and Palestinians east of the fence would lose access to land and water resources. He also called on Israel to reverse its settlement policy and to dismantle settlements built after March 2001.

JAMES B. CUNNINGHAM (United States) reminded the Assembly that, just last week, three Americans were killed in the Gaza Strip. His delegation supported President George Bush's statement that the Palestinian Authority should have fought terrorism long ago. Any resolution regarding the fence should take into account the larger picture, he said, including the security situation. The United States opposed a call for the International Court of Justice to render an opinion, stating that any resolution must be made through negotiations. Injecting a new player would only complicate matters and politicize the Court. The United States, along with the Quartet partners, would work towards the two-State solution set forth in the Road Map. He expressed his nation's continued commitment to the Road Map.

MOKHTAR LAMANI, Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said that he had hoped that, on 14 October, the Security Council would have used its powers to stop the construction of the wall. But, instead, action was stopped by the veto power. The so-called security fence furthered Israel's illegal practices in the Palestinian territory. It annexed Palestinian territories and would divide the West Bank

into hundreds of prison-like entities. It had all the features of a racist crime as defined in international declarations.

He cited many voices that had called for the cessation of the construction of the wall. Israeli violations of international law had taken dangerous escalations in the past few years; more violence would result from continuing to ignore such Israeli actions. He reiterated the call for an effective method of protecting Palestinians under Israeli occupation. The international community, he said, must force Israel to desist from its expansionist policy of settlements, as well as its construction of the wall under discussion.

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