
UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

*“Action by European, Arab and other parliamentarians
and their umbrella organizations for Israeli-Palestinian peace”*

Nicosia
6 and 7 May 2009

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace was held in Nicosia on 6 and 7 May 2009, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 63/26 and 63/27 of 26 November 2008. The theme of the Meeting was *“Action by European, Arab and other parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations for Israeli-Palestinian peace”*.
2. The Committee was represented at the meeting by a delegation comprising Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Saviour F. Borg (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Fidel Vascos Gonzalez (Cuba), Representing the Vice-Chairman of the Committee; 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

“Assessment of the current situation and the prospects for peace”, “Looking ahead: Identifying the most efficient ways in which parliamentarians can make a difference in advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace” and “Coordination of efforts undertaken by parliamentarians to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace: national, regional and other types of initiatives”.

4. Presentations were made by 19 experts, including Palestinian and Israeli experts. Mr. Dennis Kucinich, Member of the United States House of Representatives, was unable to travel to Nicosia and addressed the Meeting via video. Representatives of 29 Governments, Palestine, 1 intergovernmental organization, 3 United Nations bodies and 12 civil society organizations, as well as special guests of the host country and representatives of the media and academic institutions attended the Meeting.

5. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, H.E. Mr. Paul Badji, and the delegation of the Committee were received by H.E. Mr. Dimitris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Marios Garoyian, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, and Ms. Eleni Mavrou, Mayor of Nicosia. The Committee delegation expressed its deep appreciation of the active and constructive role played by Cyprus, a member of the Committee since its inception, in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

6. The main points of the discussion were summarized in the concluding statement of the organizers (see annex i).

II. Opening statements

7. **George Iacovou**, Presidential Commissioner, representing the President of the Republic of Cyprus, said that it was a crucial moment for efforts to achieve the long-awaited peace in the Middle East. The presence of parliamentarians was indicative of the primary importance that the international community attributed to a just and final settlement of the conflict. The firm commitment of Cyprus to a peaceful and negotiated settlement of international disputes and, more specifically, the Arab-Israeli conflict, was once again reaffirmed by its readiness to host the Meeting. At the centre of the whole effort was the fundamental quest for Israeli-Palestinian peace and the creation of a viable sovereign and territorially contiguous Palestinian State. Despite certain promising commitments by all sides, opening prospects for mutually acceptable arrangements, recent dramatic events had jeopardized the endeavour, and had even caused it to regress. He noted that the Palestinian commitment to peace and statehood was founded on the two-State solution principle and the principle of land for peace. The abandonment of either principle would have destabilizing implications for the whole region. Israel's reluctance to embrace the two-State solution and the Annapolis peace process were among the difficult challenges, which also included the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those hindered the vitality of a future Palestinian State, and stymied political negotiations. He cautioned that if that policy persisted, in a few years, the West Bank would become fragmented, with no prospects of economic and social development.

8. He identified an urgent need for inter-Palestinian reconciliation, and argued for the formation of a consensus Government, which was truly a peace partner. Urgent issues included the establishment of a long-term stable ceasefire in Gaza, with guarantees for its implementation. Those challenges required concerted and coordinated action. The role of the European Union as a good-faith mediator and a directly concerned partner for the development of the immediate region was of vital importance. The commitment of the new United States Administration was encouraging, and he looked forward to more substantial coordination between the Quartet and the Arab League.

9. **Marios Garoyian**, President of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, said that action by European, Arab and other parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations for Israeli-Palestinian peace held out hope that parliamentary diplomacy, a relatively novel notion in international relations, was starting to bear fruit, particularly for more complex situations, such as the one being discussed. Cyprus, and particularly its Parliament, finding itself at the crossroads of a very sensitive area of the world, and having experienced the bitter results of war and the ongoing Turkish occupation, extended its friendship and assistance, and pledged to contribute to bringing and solidifying peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East.

10. He said that the House of Representatives had not remained idle in the face of the vicissitudes in the area, especially during conflict and the consequent humanitarian needs in the aftermath of Israel's attack on Gaza, and on innumerable other occasions, including repeated crises in Lebanon. The House issued a unanimous resolution, on 8 January, condemning the military attack on Gaza, which undermined the perspective of dialogue for peace. On that occasion, and in previous relevant resolutions, the House had reaffirmed its solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people; it had also reaffirmed its adherence to the right of the State of Israel and a Palestinian State to coexist peacefully, in security and within internationally recognized borders. The House of Representatives had joined other national parliaments in their efforts to promote Israeli-Palestinian peace on many occasions. Cyprus, given its geographical position and its very good relations with all parties in the area, as well as its capacity as both a member of the European Union and a country rich with Middle Eastern cultural traits, could be the ideal bridge upon which to construct a solid peace dialogue with the parties to the conflict in the Middle East, he noted.

11. United Nations Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon**, in a statement delivered on his behalf by Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, said that the Quartet remained firmly committed to the goal of a two-State solution. He expressed strong support for a reinforced role of the Quartet, and the stated commitment of United States President Obama to peace in the Middle East. He expressed concern about the situation in the Gaza Strip, with the closure preventing humanitarian assistance, economic recovery and development. He called on Israel to provide adequate entry of fuel, cash and construction materials.

12. He went on to say that he had transmitted a summary of the report of the Board of Inquiry on the hostilities in Gaza to the Security Council, and was reviewing the recommendations contained therein. He called for a durable ceasefire including in Gaza, open crossings; the prevention of illicit supply of weapons; and the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority. He expressed support for the continued efforts of Egypt to promote Palestinian reconciliation, and for efforts to secure the release of Corporal Shalit of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

13. He pointed out that Israel was required to freeze settlement activity and cease unilateral steps altering the status of Jerusalem. Settlement expansion, and the route of the barrier, would make it virtually impossible for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations to produce tangible results, he cautioned. In that connection, he called for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all core issues, as agreed by the parties and as

called for in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008), on the basis of two States, the land for peace principle and a just and comprehensive regional peace consistent with Security Council resolutions. He underlined the indispensable nature of the Arab Peace Initiative, and expressed his commitment to working with the parties, partners in the region and all concerned towards achieving a negotiated political settlement of the conflict.

14. Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, expressed the Committee's deep appreciation to the Government of Cyprus, an active member of the Committee. He pointed out that the political negotiations conducted over the course of the past several months had not yielded any tangible results. Events since December had effectively eliminated the momentum created by the Annapolis meeting. In the West Bank, escalating settlement activity, the demolition of Palestinian houses, settler violence, continued construction of the separation wall and obstacles to movement precluded viable peace negotiations. Despite the pledges of some \$4.5 billion United States dollars made by international donors at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference in March, there had been no progress in Gaza's recovery as the population of the Gaza Strip continued to be the hostage of Israel's political goals. He reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and called for those responsible for the deaths of civilians during the recent Gaza conflict to be brought to justice. The Committee welcomed the investigative missions mandated by the League of Arab States, the Human Rights Council and the United Nations Board of Inquiry.

15. He expressed concern about the so-called "economic peace" favoured by the new Israeli leadership. Economic peace was only possible once Palestinians were masters of their destiny. The Committee encouraged the Palestinian factions to continue their dialogue towards internal reconciliation. He called on the international community to act and advance efforts aimed at achieving a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian peace. In that regard, he welcomed the reinvigorated effort by President Obama's Administration to step up its involvement in Middle East peace efforts, including the appointment of Special Envoy George Mitchell. He considered it important that international stakeholders move beyond political rhetoric and help the parties engage in a serious political dialogue towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

16. He expressed the view that national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations played an important role in shaping public opinion, formulating policy guidelines and upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. They could be instrumental in consolidating the democratic process and institution-building in the territory under the Palestinian Authority, strengthening political dialogue between the parties and applying the principles of international law to efforts aimed at resolving the conflict. The Committee intended to continue its long history of cooperation with parliamentarians, and to engage with them and with representatives of inter-parliamentary organizations in the context of the events organized under the auspices of the Committee.

17. Elissavet Papadimitriou, Vice-President of the Greek Parliament and Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), said that the conflict figured prominently in IPU's political agenda. She said that Middle East peace could not be imposed from the outside or won on the battlefield. It could only be won once the parties sat at the negotiating table and hammered out an agreement, which put an end to occupation. It was the job of parliamentarians to do everything possible to make that a reality.

18. In the report of the IPU Assembly a few weeks ago, its President had formulated a series of recommendations for parliamentary action towards Middle East peace, she said. Everything possible must be done to forge Palestinian reconciliation and assist the Palestinian parliament, which was unable to function. IPU could provide technical assistance and capacity-building. Reconciliation implied talking to all Palestinian representatives, including the fairly elected Hamas representatives. She said efforts should be made to resolve the many cases of Palestinian parliamentarians imprisoned by Israeli authorities. Preparations should begin for the day when Palestinians went to the polls to elect a new parliament. The Union could do much to facilitate dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian members. Efforts were also being made at the parliamentary level to reconcile differences among Arab countries. Several countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, should be included in the discussions so as to build bridges, including parliamentary ones.

19. She stressed that there was no shortage of plans, such as the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map, and that everyone knew what the contours of a solution looked like. What was in desperately short supply was the political will to act. That was where members of parliament could help their Governments. She called for a break in the cycle of condemnations and recriminations, which would not bring peace and prosperity to the peoples of Israel and Palestine.

20. Abdullah Abdullah, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, representative of Palestine, expressed the appreciation of the Council to the United Nations for maintaining its support of the Palestinian people until it achieved its inalienable rights. He said the latest Israeli aggression in Gaza had been a humanitarian catastrophe. It had lasted 22 days, but it had destroyed 15 years of development. Israeli aggressive practices against the Palestinian people were impediments to peace, and attempts to isolate East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings were making it impossible to have one Palestinian sovereign State. The new Israeli Government had announced new political aims negating the glimmers of hope the Annapolis Conference had produced, and setting new terms and conditions, which served as impediments to the realization of peace.

21. He said the continued attacks against Palestinians made it impossible for Palestinian students to go to school, for farmers to reach their farms, for the sick to reach the hospitals. Parliamentarians had an important role to urge the international community to shoulder its political, legal and ethical responsibilities and to pressure Israel to abide by international resolutions. The international community had to compel the Israeli Government to stop all of its aggressive activities against the Palestinian people and its attempts to derail the peace process. Parliamentary delegations should visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory to learn about the situation on the ground first hand. They should exert greater efforts to mitigate and ultimately reverse the situation. The IPU had accepted the Palestinian Legislative Council as a full-fledged member, inviting it to attend its meetings, which was a welcome development.

22. The representative of Cuba, speaking on behalf of the **Non-Aligned Movement**, said that the Movement regretted the lack of progress in the peace process, despite increased international efforts to help the parties focus on the core issues of the conflict. The Movement stressed the need for intensified efforts by the international community to promote a genuine peace process and to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. The Movement condemned Israel's continuing military occupation of the Palestinian Territory in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, he said. It condemned in the strongest terms the recent Israeli military aggression against the

Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip that had killed more than 1,400 Palestinians and injured more than 5,500, and caused the wanton destruction of homes, civilian infrastructure, mosques public institutions, farms and United Nations facilities, and stressed the importance of a permanent, durable ceasefire, starting in Gaza and extending to the West Bank.

23. The Movement awaited the report of the Board of Inquiry dispatched to Gaza by the Secretary-General, and it called for immediate action to follow up the findings of the Board's investigation, as well as for the immediate dispatch of the fact-finding mission called for by the Human Rights Council. He said the Movement also strongly condemned Israel's continuing intensive campaign of settler colonization, the construction of the wall home demolitions excavations and the imposition of arbitrary, racist residency and movement restrictions, and it called for their immediate cessation. He stressed that such measures were grave breaches of international law and flagrant defiance of United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The Movement called for urgent action by the international community to compel the occupying Power to abide by all of its obligations under international law. He expressed the Movement's hope that ongoing efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation and unity would soon succeed.

24. The representative of the **League of Arab States** said the Israeli aggression against Gaza had violated all international laws and the Fourth Geneva Convention, including through the use of cluster bombs and depleted uranium. It had prevented relief workers from reaching the victims. Those crimes of war had been denounced by various organizations and now by the report of the Board of Inquiry circulated to the Security Council. The United Nations and its specialized agencies must stop turning a blind eye to the situation and stop dealing with Israel as a country above the law. The declaration by Israel's leadership that it was not going to abide by its commitments had led to very negative repercussions for peace, he stressed.

25. Continuing, the speaker said that the illegal occupation and the separation wall carving up the West Bank were making it impossible to establish a contiguous Palestinian State. The Israeli Government continued to impede the peace process and any serious negotiations, including by its settlements policy. Particularly troubling were the declarations by the Israeli leadership indicating the rejection of the two-State solution and insistence of a so-called "economic peace" with the Palestinians. Israel must commit to its agreements, and open the crossings to allow for Gaza's reconstruction, or face an even more serious situation in that hotbed of tension. The Arab League called on the international community to abandon its double standard, and on the parliamentarians of the world to reflect public opinion, and called in better to take the necessary steps to rectify the imbalances and prevent violations of international law.

26. The representative of the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean** detailed the work that the Assembly was carrying out in three standing committees to promote an overall peace settlement in the Middle East. He also noted other regional challenges such as the resurgence of conflict, illegal migration and climate change, all of which required collective efforts. Sharing best practices was a proven approach, and the Assembly sought to transfer knowledge among Member States.

27. He said that the Committee on the Middle East was a highly active working group. It did not point fingers, but sought to bring together parliamentarians, convinced that a lack of overall settlement in the Middle East continued to deprive the people of the Mediterranean region of peace and stability. The Assembly was seeking to serve as a catalyst for new approaches and to generate new solutions. The bureau of the Assembly would travel to the Middle East on a fact-finding mission at the end of May, he indicated. The challenge of the Middle East was delicate and sensitive, but it must be addressed. Despite the new challenges constantly arising in the Mediterranean, cooperation with all countries, particularly in the Gulf, was essential if the obstacles were to be surmounted. Fostering such cooperation was a role that the Assembly hoped to play.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary I

Assessment of the current situation and prospects for peace

28. Speakers in plenary I examined the prospects for the resumption of a genuine peace process in the wake of the military assault on Gaza and the role of parliamentarians in the new political landscape.

29. **Ziad Abu Amr**, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that recent developments, including the war in Gaza, the new Obama Administration and the accession to power in Israel of a rightist Government, were having their impact on the prospects for peace in the Middle East. The previous Israeli Government had negotiated, but only for the sake of negotiations. No Palestinian State had been established by the end of 2008, as had been hoped and promised internationally. Instead, Israeli settlement activities increased and there was a war in Gaza. The new Government, which succeeded it, had rejected the two-State solution and a freeze on settlement activities.

30. To restart a meaningful peace process, he said that only the Obama Administration could exert enough pressure on the Israeli Government to publicly declare its commitment to the two-State solution and a halt to all settlement activities. Failure to act would contribute to a further deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the entire Middle East. An innovative proposal such as a regional road map that was being discussed in United States circles, linking the Syrian-Israeli and the Palestinian-Israeli tracks, would create a stake in the negotiations for all the relevant parties, and not allow any one party to play one track against another. A regional road map was compatible with the Arab Peace Initiative and would, therefore, enjoy Arab support. He stressed that the sponsorship of the peace process should not be exclusively American. He envisaged an international coalition in support of the regional road map comprising the United States, the Russian Federation, Europe, the United Nations and regional powers, the backing of which would stiffen the resolve of the Obama Administration.

31. He said the new approach of the United States would be essentially meaningless if its policy objectives remained the same, including its strategic alliance with Israel. Scepticism was beginning to haunt the high expectations of the Palestinians and the world about President Obama's new approach, and concerns were arising anew that he might succumb in the face of the new Israeli Government's confrontational style. Time was running out. There was a chance to allay the fear and scepticism. The common belief was that solving the Palestinian-Israeli problem might be the right approach since that might be the root cause of the other problems in the region or, at the very least, used as a pretext for the

continuation of other conflicts. Parliamentarians should send a strong message to the parties that there was no alternative to the two-State solution and that it must be achieved sooner rather than later, he concluded.

32. Mustafa El-Feky, Member of Parliament of Egypt, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Egyptian People's Assembly, stressed that death and destruction in Gaza constituted crimes against humanity according to the definition of the International Criminal Court. The new Israeli Government included elements that had declared the impossibility of peace with the Palestinians. Clearly, the Israeli Government did not honour their international commitments and agreements, and had resorted to a policy of collective punishment against the Palestinians. In the face of such flagrant challenges to the peace process, parliamentarians must not rely solely on action by Governments but should use the tools available to them. Priorities should include supporting Egyptian efforts to bring about agreement among the Palestinian factions leading to a unified Government that bore the responsibility of internal reconciliation and secured the opening of Gaza crossings. Gaza reconstruction was another important priority. Parliamentarians should support all efforts to ensure that reconstruction started under conditions of full accountability and transparency and they should follow up on the pledges of Governments.

33. The third priority is the resumption of the peace process. Israel's recent aggression against Gaza should not detract from the essence of the Palestinian cause. Ultimately, what Palestinians needed was not only Gaza's reconstruction, but an end to the occupation and an independent State of Palestine. Parliamentarians were looking forward to a revival of the peace process within a clear political framework, which would be beneficial to both Israelis and Palestinians, and they should support those efforts.

34. Takis Hatzigeorgiou, Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, said the Palestine question, like the Cyprus question, was an international problem since it involved flagrant violations of international law and fundamental human rights. The so-called "realities" imposed by Israel on the ground hindered efforts towards lasting peace and stability and left Palestinians in conditions of absolute hardship and poverty. He said that prospects for peace depended on the political will to achieve reconciliation among the Palestinians and reconciliation between the Arab world and Israel. These prospects also depended on the degree of engagement of the parties concerned in reviving the peace process, as well as in ensuring full compliance with agreements reached and the two-State principle. Efforts towards rehabilitating the Palestinian economy and institutions should not be a substitute for the goal of a fully realized Palestinian State, controlling its own destiny, at peace with its neighbours and accountable to its people.

35. He highlighted the important role of the European, as a co-sponsor of the road map, as well as through its Association Agreements and European neighbourhood policy action plans with partners in the region. The Union remained the largest donor to the Palestinian cause. He recalled that despite problems as a result of the Turkish occupation, Cyprus had made a contribution of \$1 million for Gaza. The Cyprus Parliament had unanimously adopted several resolutions on the issue, most recently on 8 January 2009, condemning the military attack by Israel against the Gaza Strip, as well as any terrorist attacks. The Cypriot Parliamentarians had been participating in Middle East peace efforts at the level of the European Parliament and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, as well as in the framework of other international parliamentary organizations. He stressed that Parliamentarians should ensure that the goodwill expressed by their Governments was eventually translated into concrete action. Cypriot parliamentarians had always stressed their readiness to facilitate the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and were discussing ways to assist Gaza, including by eventually coordinating a regional parliamentary initiative. The primary role of Parliaments, as the democratically elected representative body of the people, was to uphold international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, he concluded.

36. Mohamed Barakeh, Member of the Knesset, Secretary-General of Hadash Party, said there was a view that the new Israeli Government was one of extremism, opposing to the two-State solution. The previous Government of Ehud Olmert had supported the two-State solution. The lack of such support had prompted Kadima not to participate in the new Government. However the Olmert/Livni Government had done nothing to implement the two-State solution, and had launched two wars, one in Lebanon and the other in Gaza. Whether an Israeli Government adopted the two-State slogan or not, they all agreed on the siege of Gaza and construction of the separation wall, as well as on building new settlements and restricting Palestinian movement. He called it a great lie whereby Israeli officials had declared that they would not build settlements except to accommodate natural growth, as the rate of growth of settlements was double the rate of growth of the Israeli population.

37. He welcomed the Obama Administration's appeal to Israel to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. As far as including the Iranian nuclear issue in a discussion of the Palestinian issue vis-à-vis Israel, he said that Israel had nuclear weapons as well and was indicating that, even if it signed an international treaty on the subject, that would not change Israel's production of nuclear weapons; it presently had 200 such weapons in its arsenal. Those could hardly be directed at the Palestinian people, which barely owned a weapon.

38. He criticized declarations by the present Government and the previous one insisting that Israel be recognized as a Jewish State with the intention to legitimize an ethnic-based State, to the detriment of its Arab citizens. Another worrying reality was the intra-Palestinian division, which was exacerbated as a certain regional Power was trying to expand its influence among the Palestinians. Also alarming, in his view, were Israeli plans to build a string of settlements extending from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, bisecting the West Bank into two enclaves. He called on parliamentarians to promote the passage of laws that would empower their judiciaries to prosecute war crimes committed outside their territory, such as the ones committed in Gaza. The situation whereby Palestinian legislators continued to languish in Israeli jails without charges or trial also called for action by the world's parliamentarians, he concluded.

39. Dennis Kucinich, Member of the United States House of Representatives, speaking via video message, said that parliamentarians needed to step out of the dichotomy of the "us versus them" discussion, whereby one was either with the Palestinians or against them. When there was killing, it was not for parliamentarians to take one side or another, but to help find a way for people to live in peace and security, respecting each other's right to survive. A fundamental challenge to peace globally was the fact that the world community had stood by in the face of so many human rights violations. Speaking as a friend of Israel, he supported its right to survive. But he could not let that translate into a failure to recognize the inherent, inalienable right of Palestinians to their own State.

40. He said that parliamentarians needed to be engaged in the question because their own nations would always be confronted by the harsh realities in the Middle East including Israelis and the conflict between Palestinians. He called for an understanding of the existential threat felt by Israelis and how that feeling translated into policies which might in fact be counterproductive for Israel. He said he could not support a rhetoric calling for the destruction of Israel, but Israel must also be urged to set aside its policies that had not just built walls, but had fractured any hope for

the Palestinian people to exist in a viable State. Parliamentarians had the capacity to make a difference, and they could take a position which understood the great difficulties that both sides were dealing with, he concluded.

41. Clare Short, Member of the British Parliament, pointed out that the promised international aid to rebuild Gaza was irrelevant because the borders were closed. People in Gaza were traumatized and malnourished, and continued to live amongst the rubble, relying on the supplies transported through the tunnels for all the necessities of life. In the West Bank the Palestinians were constantly harassed and intimidated as they tried to navigate the checkpoints and the wall to reach their lands, jobs, and education. Those in East Jerusalem lived with the constant threat of demolition of their houses, while those within Israel were second class citizens with limited rights and opportunities. She recalled that Archbishop Tutu and many other South African witnesses had called it an apartheid system, more cruel than that in South Africa. Former Prime Minister Olmert and President Carter had acknowledged the similarities.

42. She said that there was no prospect of a two-State solution unless massive Israeli settlements were to be evacuated, and at the moment there was no sign of this. No significant Israeli party believed in two States based on the 1967 borders. A bitter division among the Palestinians factions, a deep anger across the Muslim and Arab world, a growing rift with the West, a rise in anti-Semitic attacks across Europe, including attacks against anti-Zionists Jews, and a decline of the moral authority of the United Nations were the result of a peace process, which was going nowhere, she asserted.

43. She stated that despite his good intentions, President Obama was beset by many crises and locked into a domestic political system deeply unbalanced in its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To its shame, the European Union, the majority of whose population saw the current treatment of the Palestinians as deeply unjust, simply followed United States policy and failed to uphold international law or to create more political space for President Obama. She called on parliamentarians to tell the truth and make it clear that there was no peace process and that the possibility of a two-State solution was evaporating. Parliamentarians should call a halt to the talk of peace, under which Israel takes over more land, increases its stronghold on the Palestinians, breaches international law and is not being held to account by the Security Council or the international community.

Plenary II

Looking ahead: Identifying the most efficient ways in which parliamentarians can make a difference in advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace

44. Speakers in Plenary II explored the following themes: the role of parliamentarians in raising awareness about the situation on the ground and in the political process; networking: how parliamentarians can keep the channels of communication open among themselves; and comparative advantages: areas in which parliamentarians can make a difference.

45. Abdulhadi Majali, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan, President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, said that while the Arab-Israeli conflict was a central preoccupying theme for the Assembly; he was convinced that peace was possible, and indeed, was the will of humankind, as was the realization of the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinians. The Arab Peace Initiative enjoyed the full support of the Arab and Muslim communities, and deserved careful study by the international community, as it had promised, based on Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories, its full incorporation into the region and the ending of the 60-year state of war. The Assembly supported, without reservation, all constructive proposals that would end the conflict.

46. As Speaker of the Jordanian House of Representatives, he believed that it was necessary to encourage the parties to work towards peace and an end to the conflict, which had caused so many deaths and shaken the region for so many years. Israeli settlements and their expansion must be halted, along with all embargoes and policies of erecting barriers that hampered the movement of those suffering under occupation, which violated their human rights. All prisoners should be released, and land confiscations and excavations, which threaten the destruction of holy shrines and house demolitions, especially in Jerusalem, must cease. Jordan was pursuing moderate policies and was convinced that peace could be achieved. The people of the region were looking forward to peace. Jordan was working hard to promote modern values, coexistence and compromise. He called on all parliamentarians to promote an end of the occupation of all Arab lands, including the Golan Heights and Sheba Farms, a just solution to the refugee issue and support the Arab Peace Initiative. The time had come to put an end to the tragic story and the use of force.

47. Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, said the contribution parliamentary diplomacy could make to Israeli-Palestinian peace could only be modest, quiet, and incremental. IPU, the European Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean had all established specialized groups working on the Middle East. However, too many overlapping initiatives diluted their impact and created confusion.

48. He proposed convening a special session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, hosted by Malta, dedicated to the Palestine issue. He felt, however, that traditional conferences had a short-lived effect; information technology could provide continuity through virtual meetings and networking. Another option to consider was a forum of former chief negotiators of agreements between the two sides. He called for an expanded dialogue on strategic ways forward between parliamentarians from the Quartet countries and from countries in the region such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, which Malta as a neutral country could host. Another option was a meeting, also in Malta, of the Chairs of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation, the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council, and of the Arab countries, under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He called upon the United Nations, in particular the Palestinian Rights Committee, to support such initiatives.

49. He suggested establishing a parliament-funded scholarship programme, sponsoring young Israeli and Palestinian scholars in order to promote understanding and dialogue, including inter-religious dialogue. Parliaments could also invite keynote speakers, Israelis and Palestinians, to conduct debates on the Palestine issue, hold briefings by parliamentarians taking part in meetings abroad and strengthen public awareness through media coverage. Participation by parliamentarians in international meetings, including at United Nations Headquarters, also needed to be

increased. Progress needed to be sought with regard to the open-ended detention without trial of the PLC members by Israel.

50. He warned that in order for the Euro-Mediterranean “Barcelona process” to remain relevant, it urgently needed to evolve and to address critical ownership and leadership issues. The “Union for the Mediterranean” initiative of President Sarkozy was an important attempt to breathe life into the process. Since Helsinki I, Malta had argued that there could be no security in Europe unless there was security in the Mediterranean. Parliamentarians from the region had an open challenge for tomorrow – either to leave the Mediterranean as a great divide or to work tirelessly for a closely linked region of the future.

51. Eleni Theocharous Kariolou, Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, highlighted the recent establishment of a joint diplomatic mission of Cyprus and Malta to the Palestinian Authority. Cyprus was uniquely positioned to contribute to Israeli-Palestinian peace because it also maintained good relations with Israel. She recalled that she had seen the extreme conditions in Gaza first hand. Having experienced war and occupation in her own homeland, she felt that one could never do enough to overcome the calamities of conflict and to fight for peace, which could never be attained with arms, but solely through dialogue. At the same time, negotiations that went on forever without agreement jeopardized peace by undermining mutual confidence.

52. She said that recent events, the tragic balance sheet of the recent attack on Gaza, the Israeli elections and efforts to attain agreement between Fatah and Hamas had produced changes in the contours of the problem, which called for responses on the ground and to address the fundamentals of the problem. Ways already existed for parliamentarians to network among themselves, and at the multilateral level a multitude of forums existed. Awareness of the situation on the ground in Gaza had been raised. It was necessary to do both, to alleviate the tragic consequences and not to allow the war to happen again, she said. Both sides saw the need for a political settlement, but it should be stressed that the winner of conflicts could not necessarily take all. She emphasized that parliamentary diplomacy had a comparative advantage as parliamentarians were less inhibited by formalities, which translated into flexibility. Parliaments should coordinate with their Governments to turn pressure into concrete and longer-term policies.

53. She said that the parties to the conflict should be urged to fulfil their obligations under the road map and the Annapolis commitments. There should be a contiguous Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and Israeli settlement activities, which are an obstacle to peace, must cease. The Arab Peace Initiative should be supported. The new Israeli Government must become a peace partner in favour of the two-State vision. The United States and the European Union must pressure that Government to accept the Annapolis process and the two-State solution, and pressure Palestinians for their all-important reconciliation, supporting the Egyptian efforts. The urgent needs in Gaza must absolutely be met, and all crossings must be opened. There must be an exchange of prisoners and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council must be released from Israeli prisons. Finally, all parties must condemn and stop all forms of intimidation, threats and violence, particularly against innocent civilians.

54. Harri Grünberg, Political Adviser in the German Bundestag, said that Europe was divided in its Middle East policy. Germany’s posture was influenced by its historical obligation toward the Jewish people. Which many social movements were demanding an economic boycott of Israel similar to the one against South Africa, all parties in the Bundestag rejected this. He asserted that even under Netanyahu-Liberman one could not speak of apartheid in Israel, although if current trends continued it could one day become a reality.

55. He argued that Germany, as one of the most important States of the European Union, had to take on more responsibility toward a political solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and not just in matters of assistance. Under current conditions this meant no upgrading of the relations between the European Union and Israel, but rather giving Israel a guarantee of joining the European Union together with an independent Palestinian State. European parliaments also had to reconsider the decision to boycott Hamas, and to support all efforts to build a Government of national reconciliation. He said that parliamentarians should demand an end to Israeli occupation and military incursions. They should speak out against ethnic confrontations between Jews and Israeli Palestinians, demand an end to land confiscations and the Judaization of East Jerusalem and push for dismantling settlements that were not part of the land exchange between Israel and the Palestinians. No more settlers’ goods should be exported into Europe as being “Produced in Israel”.

56. During the Gaza war, for the first time, a majority of German public opinion had condemned the excessive use of force by Israel. Unfortunately, there still was no criticism from the German Government. Time was running out, he warned. Since Oslo and Madrid in the 1990s, Israel had been talking about peace while building settlements and confiscating more land. Creating overcrowded settlements similar to Bantustans similar in the Gaza Strip and annexing the rest was not acceptable, he stressed. Parliamentarians should put pressure on the Netanyahu-Liberman Government to present a timetable for a Palestinian State. Parliamentary visits to Gaza and the West Bank increased pressure on Israel and increased contacts with progressive forces for a stronger vision of peace.

57. Mossi Raz, former member of the Knesset, said that the violence between Israelis and Palestinians continued, including the launching of Qassam missiles and attacks by the Israeli Air Force in Gaza. He called on participants to condemn all violence, regardless of who was behind it, while also condemning the occupation and settlement activities, house demolitions and land confiscations. He understood there was a difference between an Air Force attack and an attack with a Qassam rockets.

58. In order to consider the role of parliamentarians, he said that it was first necessary to clearly define the desired aims. First and foremost, that was an end to the violence and the Israeli occupation, and to human rights violations. The way forward was to create two States with in the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State. The best way to that achieve would be good to accept the Arab League Peace Initiative. Israel should achieve a peace treaty with the Syrian Arab Republic, meaning an end to the occupation in the Golan Heights, with Lebanon and all the other Arab countries.

59. He said that among the Israeli population, many supported the Arab initiative and the two-State solution, as had the previous Israeli Government, although he was not sure that many supported the 1967 borders. The two-State solution had gone unimplemented, however, because of a basic lack of trust in the Palestinians by many in Israel. The role of Israel’s parliamentarians was to criticize the Government policy and advocate the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. Arab parliamentarians, including Palestinians, should talk to the Israelis and meet with them to explain the Arab initiative in detail, because it was really quite straightforward. Looking ahead, he expressed guarded optimism about the future of the peace process. He said that the previous Israeli Government had rhetorically supported the two-State solution, so that there was

no pressure on it to implement its commitments. Mr. Netanyahu, on the other hand, was more vulnerable to international and domestic pressure. During his previous tenure as Prime Minister he had negotiated and signed the Hebron protocol with Arafat. He called on parliamentarians to be very active in educating public opinion and their Governments about the realities of the conflict, which often went misreported by the mainstream media of both sides.

60. George Vella, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Middle East of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was basically about territory and sovereignty. The conflict had been one of provocation, followed by excessive retaliation. While the Israeli and Palestinian populations at large wanted peaceful coexistence between two sovereign States, extremist elements in the political spheres on both sides had sought total victory, whatever the human price. He argued that the role of parliamentarians should be to convince those elements to embrace compromise, and to accept that peace would never be achieved through military means, be they Qassam rockets or IDF firepower.

61. Parliamentary diplomacy worked in parallel to, often even paving the road to, traditional diplomatic initiatives. Parliamentarians enjoyed the unique advantage of being able to work closely with their constituencies, and they were therefore freer than Governments to meet and talk among themselves. At the national level, members of parliament passed into law and monitored the implementation of international standards and agreements, which had a bearing on Israeli-Palestinian peace. They set an example of peaceful dialogue, and shaped public opinion. Some went on to hold cabinet responsibilities and to implement the political visions born out of their interaction with foreign colleagues. He called for keeping the channels of communication between parliamentarians open and for speaking out against boycotts and sanctions, which only intensified extremism. Parliamentarians should avoid taking sides in the conflict so as to maintain their credibility.

62. Like other inter-parliamentary organizations, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean had set up a dedicated ad hoc committee to deal with the Middle East. He stressed that such bodies should not be mere venues for recrimination or mills for hackneyed declarations. They should serve as catalysts for forward-looking practical solutions. He announced that the Assembly's Bureau, including its President and its Secretary-General, would travel to the Middle East on a fact-finding mission at the end of the month of May to Cairo, Gaza, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Amman. The aim was to support the Middle East peace process, assess the situation post-Gaza, re-engage the Israeli Parliament, and support efforts to increase humanitarian aid. It was incumbent on parliamentarians to ensure that the Netanyahu Government in Israel came round to the two-State policy, and to convince Hamas to accept Israel's right to exist and, once again, to participate in the election of a Palestinian Government. He called on parliamentarians to support Egypt's efforts to achieve Palestinian reunification and ensure that Gaza is again opened up. Parliamentarians had to underline the fact that Israeli settlements, the final status of Jerusalem, the right of return of refugees, the wall of separation and the situation in the refugee camps in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan were crucial issues impacting any final agreement. He also called upon parliamentarians to acknowledge the efforts of Turkey to mediate between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the more vigorous efforts of the European Union and the Obama Administration towards peace in the Middle East.

63. Qais Abdel-Karim Khadar, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the situation of Cyprus was not dissimilar to the calamitous situation of the Palestinians, and that it would eminently qualify Cyprus to play a role for peace in the region. The Palestinian Legislative Council fully welcomed that role. While the new Administration of the United States was giving unprecedented importance to advancing the peace process, it was clashing with the Government of extremists in Israel, which did not conceal its opposition to the principles of peace. The declarations of the Israeli Foreign Minister had been very clear – the Government did not consider itself committed to the Annapolis process, it would relinquish the “land for peace” principle and the two-State solution. When the Israeli Prime Minister called for negotiations without preconditions, he meant eluding Israeli commitments.

64. He warned that if the obstacles that hindered previous negotiations were not addressed, it would lead only to a new scenario of failure. The aim had to be clear, namely, to end the Israeli occupation and create an independent, sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That meant a cessation of all settlement activities, including “natural growth”, and the construction of the separation wall. Under cover of the Annapolis peace negotiations, Israel persisted in expanding settlements, building the wall, Judaizing Jerusalem and launching an aggressive war in Gaza.

65. He called upon President of the United States, Barack Obama, to take the position of the Palestinian Authority that there was no use in continuing talks without a commitment by Israel for the basic requirements of the peace process. Seriously, Annapolis had collapsed, while under the cover of negotiations, Israel had persisted in its untenable policies. He argued that the main reason it had not been possible to find a way out had been that the process, thus far, had lacked balance. In the absence of an equal balance of power, the international community had to intervene to pressure Israel to put an end to the violations of international law, with appropriate penalties. Otherwise, it would be impossible to advance the peace process. Responding to a previous speaker, he said that maintaining balance meant respecting the norms of international legitimacy, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions. Parliamentarians should ensure that their Governments comply with decisions such as the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the separation wall.

Plenary III

Coordination of efforts undertaken by parliamentarians to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace: national, regional and other types of initiatives

66. Speakers in Plenary III discussed the following issues: framework for action: at the national level, through umbrella organizations and through regional organizations; the complementary roles of the legislative and executive branches, and broadening the framework: how parliamentarians can work with the United Nations and other entities.

67. Abdullah Abdullah, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said there were members' ideas being forwarded, what was needed was ways to implement them. Peace in the Middle East required ending the Israeli occupation, ensuring that Palestinians become sovereign in their land and giving those in Israel who were skeptical and fearful some reassurance. Parliamentary diplomacy was not new - there had been many initiatives. As far as Israeli-Palestinian peace was concerned, he recalled a 1992 initiative of IPU to support the peace process. An earlier IPU initiative of 1986 centred on holding an international conference on the Middle East, and IPU considered having a parliamentary dimension as a

contribution, for which it had voted to create a committee representing the five geographical regions.

68. Furthermore, he said that, after Madrid and Oslo, the IPU initiative had been transformed into a Committee on Middle East issues, with the aim of advancing the peace negotiations. Over time, its level of activity had declined, so that no real progress had been achieved. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had also failed to make a real contribution to peace, because of the reluctance of the Israeli side to go even so far as the Annapolis understandings, or to adopt terms of reference based on United Nations resolutions. Other regional parliamentary assemblies were also thinking of contributing to advancing the peace process. What was needed was a serious attempt to bring all those disparate initiatives into one and, instead of seeking new ideas, to seek ways of implementing the abundant plans for peace that were already on the table. He emphasized that parliaments, as the conscience of the people, had a legal, public and moral responsibility to ensure that provisions of international law were respected.

69. Michael Reinprecht, Head of Unit EuroMed of the European Parliament, Brussels, made a presentation on the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly fact-finding mission to Gaza of 22 to 24 February 2009, which had taken it to Cairo, Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah and Amman. This mission had taken place at a critical moment, both for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During its meeting with Israeli politicians, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, the delegation, led by the President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, and comprising the Chairs of various committees of the Assembly insisted on a two-State solution and a political solution with the Islamic Republic of Iran. It also had maintained that a strengthened Palestinian economy and security situation could not substitute for the two-State solution.

70. He drew attention to the recent resolution adopted by the Assembly's political committee on the Middle East situation. Despite threats of a walkout by the Knesset delegation, the committee had managed to continue its constructive work and dialogue and from this its value was derived. Recalling that he had seen the results of the Gaza assault with his own eyes, he recalled what President Pöttering had said during the fact-finding mission: "Each and every individual, regardless of their religion or nationality, had the same dignity, and that must be the guiding principle for all countries of on Assembly, especially in the conflict zones of the Middle East".

71. Hector Amigo, Member of the Cuban National Assembly and President of the Cuban Commission for the Environment, said that parliamentarians had the responsibility to speak up whenever the occupation of a country against its people's will by a foreign power persisted, as in the case of Israel, which continued to submit the Palestinian people to grave violations of their most basic rights while being assured impunity by the support of the Government of the United States in the United Nations Security Council and in other international forums. Paradoxically, the same country adjudged itself the right to create a list of terrorist countries in which Cuba was included, and continued to imprison Cuba's "five heroes."

72. The Cuban parliament adopted a declaration immediately after the unjustified aggression against the Gaza Strip on December 27 condemning the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of sophisticated mass extermination weapons against men, women, children and the elderly, all civilians. He called on parliamentarians from all over the world to demand that Governments exert a more effective and concerted action at the United Nations in favour of the Palestinian cause, condemn the brutal Gaza blockade, reiterate the repudiation of the forcible scattering of millions of Palestine refugees and increase efforts to bring the perpetrators of the crimes committed in the Gaza Strip to justice. He called on parliamentarians to support the recent call of IPU urging the immediate release of the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who had been arbitrarily detained by the Israeli authorities, denounce the settlement policy and condemn the construction of the "wall of the shame."

73. The Cuban National Assembly had stated its firm support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people of exercising its sovereignty and self-determination in an independent State, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital at national, regional and international forums. Cuban parliamentarians reaffirmed their rejection of the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and condemned the violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

74. Yariv Oppenheimer, General Director of Peace Now, Tel Aviv, stated said the peace camp was trying to convince the sceptical Israeli public that, for the sake of a normal life, of global recognition of Israel, the occupation and the conflict with the Palestinians had to end. Many Israelis who supported the two-State solution did not believe that a withdrawal from the West Bank would lead to peace and security. Those who opposed it felt that Arabs just wanted to destroy Israel and would never accept its existence.

75. He stressed that both sides had made tremendous steps towards peace, and also made tremendous mistakes. One reason Oslo had failed was because Hamas, by blowing up buses, had made it impossible for Israelis to believe in peace. Israeli right-wingers, meanwhile had done everything in their power to build more settlements and cement the occupation. Parliamentarians must look at the situation from a balanced perspective, he said. He had condemned the war in Gaza, but it was the reaction to missiles fired into Israeli cities, that could not be ignored. The rockets were fired because Israel was closing Gaza and imposing a curfew. However, Hamas had taken over the Gaza Strip by force and was insisting on getting even more weapons from the Islamic Republic of Iran to threaten Israel. He said that more condemnations of Israel, including pressure and boycotts, were somewhat effective, but that they would not solve the problem. The only way forward was to start a political channel that would lead to the two-State solution.

76. He said the goal of the parliamentarians, both inside Israel and outside, was to create channels of communication, which was lacking when it came to the Palestinian side and the rest of the Arab world. Parliamentarians could also help activate an informal political channel, which would influence and challenge decision-makers. Israelis also needed reassurance that in case of a withdrawal from the West Bank, it would not become a base for attacks by extremists, similar to Gaza.

77. Stavros Zenios, Rector of the University of Cyprus, argued that worldwide, political fragmentation was driven by nationalism, which wanted borders that encompassed entire nations, and rulers to come from the same nation as the ruled. The nationalism of Greek Cypriots wanted union with Greece. The nationalism of Turkish Cypriots wanted their own separate State. Another force that shaped the world was integration: as a result mainly of technological advances nation States could no longer control the flow of money, ideas, technology, goods and people. International institutions increasingly constrained what States did.

78. He called for creative leadership, with foresight to separate what people wanted from what they really needed. People, on both sides of the Cypriot divide, driven by memories of insecurity, wanted law and order and seemed to prefer the status quo. As member of the European Union,

Cypriots needed to cultivate a sense of reciprocity with that European partners, with neighbours and within the Cyprus communities, to promote multicultural relations, social solidarity and the pursuit of common goals, such as protecting the environment, finding enough water and securing sustainable energy. He argued that leaders could exhibit toxic leadership by promoting an “us against them” mentality or, alternatively, creative leadership by asking people to believe in their own powers to overcome their fears and to exercise high moral authority by staying firmly on the course of the universal values of tolerance, respect for the democratic process and belief in the power of communication and dialogue. Institutions of higher learning played an important role in cultivating these values.

IV. Closing statements

79. Saviour Borg, Rapporteur of the Committee, introduced the concluding statement of the organizers (see annex I).

80. Michalis Stavrinos, Head of the Middle East and Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, thanked the organizers of the Meeting, the United Nations, the Palestinian Rights Committee and the House of Representatives of Cyprus for the initiative to organize the event during a very critical period for the Middle East peace process. The selection of Cyprus as the venue of the meeting was indicative of the pivotal role that the country, which enjoyed good relations with both parties to the conflict, could play as its approach was guided by the rules of international law, full respect for human rights and adherence to the commitments previously undertaken by the parties themselves. The geographical proximity of the island to the Middle East allowed it to act as a useful springboard for the initiatives of the European Union aimed at peace and prosperity, as Europe had done after two catastrophic wars.

81. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said that since Annapolis, Palestinians had negotiated in good faith, but they had not succeeded in reaching agreement with the Israelis. Many prominent observers acknowledged that the Palestinian Authority had significantly improved the security situation. However, not only had the Israelis not abided by their obligations, but by their own admission, settlement activities during the negotiations had increased 17-fold in comparison with 2008, and the number of checkpoints had increased from 540 to 640. Annapolis had failed. The obstacles that had led to the failure of Annapolis had to be removed from the path of the next round of negotiations, if there was to be a next round.

82. He emphasized that there was international consensus, both at the United Nations and within the international community, of what the solution should be, adding that even the United States was part of that consensus. It was the birth of the Palestinian State in the territory Israel occupied in 1967 with East Jerusalem as capital, and a just agreed solution to the refugee issue based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). There was also a global consensus on the need to remove the obstacles to negotiations: to freeze settlement, including natural growth; remove outposts and checkpoints; and to lift the siege on Gaza. Governments, parliamentarians and civil society had to muster the political will to see to it that those obstacles were removed and to bring everyone into compliance with the international consensus on the issue. Palestinians wanted to hear if Annapolis was still on the table and, if not, what other ideas the United States and others had. It was unproductive to continue to analyse the situation. Only practical suggestions would lead to success in this endeavour. If that effort failed, the Palestinians would continue their struggle against the occupation in other forms, he concluded.

83. In closing the Meeting, **Paul Badji**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said it had been gratifying to see the extent to which parliamentarians were engaged in trying to find a solution to that decades-old conflict and in making a difference. Inter-parliamentary diplomacy could be effective when intergovernmental dialogue was deadlocked. Indeed, that might be the present challenge. The parliamentarians at the meeting had made it possible to step out of the habitual paradigms and had shown the participants new ways to create a climate conducive to a new era of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. That could only come from a firm commitment to upholding the rights and legitimate aspirations of both peoples.

84. Everyone was aware of what needed to be done to bring peace, he said, agreeing with the previous speaker. Everyone was also aware that the task of bringing peace to the Middle East had now been rendered even more difficult in the wake of the military assault on Gaza and the new political landscape. However, none of those issues, no matter how sensitive or politically and emotionally laden, could be excluded from the peace negotiations if a viable and lasting peace was to be achieved. An alternative to violence, based on respect for international law, had to be found.

85. He said that the international community, acting through Governments and parliaments, had the legal and moral responsibility to strive for peace, despite the current obstacles. It was time to apply the principles of international law as enshrined in United Nations resolutions, including the principle of land for peace. The new political landscape in the Middle East allowed, at best, for very cautious optimism. Yet, the unacceptable situation of more than 40 years of continuous occupation had to be urgently redressed to allow both Israelis and Palestinians to coexist in peace and security. The Committee would continue to raise awareness of all aspects of the question of Palestine, in accordance with its mandate, until the occupation was brought to an end and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was resolved in all its aspects. He thanked the participants and the Government of Cyprus.

Annex I

Concluding Statement of the Organizers

1. The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian peace was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Nicosia on 6 and 7 May 2009.
2. The objective of the Meeting was to emphasize the important role played by national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations at the

regional and international levels in shaping public opinion, formulating policy guidelines and upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. Participants in the Meeting discussed ways in which lawmakers could be instrumental in helping Israelis and Palestinians resume the political dialogue. The Meeting also underscored the need to promote and apply the principles of international law to all efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East conflict and in particular, its core issue, the question of Palestine.

3. The participants expressed serious concern about the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Participants were particularly alarmed about the status of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians in the wake of Israel's military assault on Gaza. While the negotiations remained suspended and the prospects for their genuine resumption were considered bleak, the participants urged the new Israeli Government to declare its support for a two-State solution.

4. Participants were appalled by the lack of any tangible improvement of the situation in Gaza. The Israeli military invasion of December and January had left some 1,440 Palestinian killed and over 5,300 injured, the majority of whom were civilians. It had also led to a massive destruction and damage of Palestinian homes, property and infrastructure. The military onslaught had followed many months of a suffocating Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip – a policy continued to date. As a result, Palestinians were faced with severe shortages of all basic and essential supplies, including materials badly needed to commence reconstruction. Participants recalled that under the Fourth Geneva Convention Israel, the occupying Power, was obliged to protect the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation and to act within the ambit of international law. Participants noted that all efforts to achieve a ceasefire should be supported and should lead to a permanent cessation of violence. They strongly condemned the killing of innocent civilians by either side. Violence has negatively affected all efforts at promoting political dialogue. Negotiations should not be held hostage to agendas of extremists. Participants called for an immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the opening of all crossings in accordance with the Agreement on Access and Movement of 15 November 2005. They also called for the release of all prisoners, including Palestinian parliamentarians.

5. Participants expressed their appreciation for the immediate and continued engagement of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, Governments, national parliaments, regional and international organizations and civil society organizations to achieve a ceasefire, provide basic services to the civilian population, investigate possible violations of international humanitarian law and demand concrete steps to improve the situation. Participants commended Arab and European parliamentarians who had been among the first on the ground to collect first-hand information and to report back to their Governments and constituencies. They encouraged parliamentarians to stay involved in the issue and to engage their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, as well as their own Governments with a view to promoting a political solution of the conflict.

6. Participants concurred that the situation in Gaza would improve only once progress in the Israeli-Palestinian political process has been achieved. In that context, all efforts towards the goal of achieving a negotiated final status agreement should be encouraged and fully supported. To that end, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations must be resumed with the clearly stated goal of achieving a two-State solution. Negotiations needed to be buttressed by tangible improvements of the situation on the ground. Most importantly, the parties must fulfil their obligations under phase I of the road map.

7. In that regard, participants expressed that serious concern over Israel's ongoing settlement activity, with the Government continuing to confiscate large areas of Palestinian land and issue thousands of tenders for new housing units in settlements in the West Bank. Participants reiterated that the presence of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was illegal under international law. They called on Israel to immediately cease settlement activity, including construction related to "natural growth", and to dismantle settlement outposts. Of particular concern was the expansion and consolidation of large settlement blocks in and around East Jerusalem, especially in the so-called "E-1" area. It was observed that the presence of settlements in that area had resulted in severing Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, cutting the West Bank into two parts and prejudging the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. Participants were particularly alarmed by the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem, where close to 2,000 demolition orders were currently pending, and many more Palestinian families were potentially at risk of losing their homes. In that connection, participants endorsed the proposal of convening a special conference of parliamentarians on Jerusalem as soon as possible.

8. Participants denounced the continued construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its effects on Palestinian communities, and recalled the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, in which the Court had clearly stated that the construction of the wall was illegal under international law and insisted on its removal. Furthermore, they called for the removal of the many barriers and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restoration of the situation that had existed before September 2000. They emphasized the need for more serious action by the international community to challenge the presence of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Participants commended the courageous advocacy actions of numerous parliamentarians who had participated in demonstrations against the wall, provided assistance to Gaza and kept their home constituencies informed about the harsh realities of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. They encouraged them to continue to support action on these issues at the regional and international levels.

9. Participants warned that, taken together, the systematic policies and actions of the occupying Power towards the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip seriously endangered an internationally supported approach to the solution of the conflict, rendering the creation of a viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State impossible. They called upon the parties to work for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine based on the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The participants reiterated that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be found in accordance with international law based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), and 1850 (2008) and all other relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Participants agreed that a negotiated solution to the question of Jerusalem, based on international law, was key not only to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also to a lasting peace in the whole region. In that connection, participants recalled that the status of Jerusalem could only be resolved through negotiations and in full accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and agreed that the continued support of the international community was crucial for advancing the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all core issues. They reiterated that the Arab Peace Initiative remained an important element for advancing peace in the region which should be seized.

10. Participants expressed that serious concern that Israel was not abiding by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide protection to the civilian population under occupation. The applicability of the Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been repeatedly confirmed by the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, as well as by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice. It was pointed out that parliamentarians had a special responsibility to ensure that their

Governments took a principled action under the Convention to ensure respect of and adherence to norms of international humanitarian law.

11. Participants voiced their concern about the internal Palestinian divisions blocking national unity of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority. They expressed support for all efforts of Arab and other countries, in particular for the efforts by Egypt, as well as for the initiatives of President Abbas, aimed at promoting reconciliation and restoration of Palestinian national unity, which were essential for progress in achieving a permanent settlement of the question of Palestine. They encouraged the Palestinian factions to put the national interests and aspirations of the Palestinian people ahead of any partisan concerns and to bring the current rounds of talks to an early and successful conclusion.

12. Participants at the Meeting, hosted by Cyprus, a Member State of the European Union, appreciated the critical role played by the Union and other European States in support of the Palestinian people. They appreciated the profound interest and wide involvement of European institutions, its Commission, the Parliament and other structures in efforts at supporting a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They encouraged the policy-making organs of the Union continue to play a more supportive and proactive role in various aspects of the political process, thus complementing the substantial economic assistance provided by the European Commission.

13. Participants were of the view that national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations had a special role to play in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Such organizations as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the European-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly of the Barcelona Process, the European Parliament and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union worked to uphold international law and promote an effective political dialogue aimed at resolving all permanent status issues. Participants encouraged these inter-parliamentary organizations to develop closer cooperation among themselves, with Israeli and Palestinian lawmakers and with the United Nations and its Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, with a view to supporting a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, including a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In that context, participants noted the valid recommendations and suggestions made during the Meeting in Nicosia to strengthen the role of parliamentarians at the national, regional, and international levels in contributing towards the resolution of the question of Palestine. They called on the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in collaboration with the above-mentioned inter-parliamentary organizations, to examine those proposals with a view to their eventual implementation.

14. Participants commended Cyprus for its constructive role in the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and encouraged its continuation. They welcomed the personal interest of the President of the Republic of Cyprus in the United Nations Meeting and appreciated his message in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace. They commended the many members of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus for their vivid interest and engagement in the question of Palestine, thus contributing to efforts at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants expressed gratitude to the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus for hosting the Meeting and the generous hospitality extended to them.

Annex II

List of participants

Speakers

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah
Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Ramallah

Mr. Héctor Amigo
Member of the Cuban National Assembly and President of the Commission for the Environment
Havana

Mr. Ziad Abu Amr
Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Ramallah

Mr. Mohamed Barakeh
Member of the Knesset, Secretary-General of Hadash Party
Tel Aviv

Mr. Mustafa El-Feky
Member of Parliament of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Egyptian People's Assembly
Cairo

The Hon. Louis Galea
Speaker, House of Representatives of Malta
Valetta

Mr. Harri Grünberg
Political Advisor, Deutscher Bundestag

Berlin

Dr. Eleni Theocharous Kariolou
Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus
Nicosia

Mr. Qais Abdel-Karim Khadar
Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Ramallah
Mr. Dennis Kucinich
Member of the United States House of Representatives (Democrat, Ohio)
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Takis Hatzi Georgiou
Member of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus
Former member of the Middle East Group
Inter-Parliamentary Union
Nicosia

Mr. Yariv Oppenheimer
General Director, Peace Now
Tel Aviv

H.E. Mr. Abdulhadi Majali
Speaker, House of Representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
President, Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
Amman

The Hon. Elissavet Papadimitriou
Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament
Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Athens

Mr. Mossi Raz
Former Member of the Knesset
Tel Aviv

Mr. Michael Reinprecht
Head of Unit EuroMed, Secretariat of the European Parliament
Brussels

The Rt. Hon. Clare Short, MP
Member of the British Parliament for Birmingham Ladywood
London

Mr. George Vella
Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Middle East
Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
Valetta

Mr. Stavros A. Zenios
Rector, University of Cyprus
Nicosia

**Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

H.E. Mr. Paul Badji
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chairman of the Committee

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

H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Fidel Vascos Gonzalez
Ambassador of Cuba to Cyprus
Representing the Vice-Chairman of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General

Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun
Assistant Secretary-General

Governments

Algeria
H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Hacı Benaouda, Ambassador to Lebanon
Embassy in Beirut

Australia
Mr. Evan Williams, High Commissioner to Cyprus
High Commission in Nicosia

Austria
H.E. Mrs. Eva Hager, Ambassador to Cyprus
Embassy in Nicosia

Belgium
H.E. Mr. Guy Sevrin, Ambassador to Cyprus
Embassy in Nicosia

Bulgaria
Mr. Plamen Hristov, Second Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

China
Mr. Liu Guangxian, Deputy Head of the Mission
Embassy in Nicosia

Cyprus
H.E. Dr. Michalis Stavrinos, Head, Middle East and Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Socrates Socratos, Secretary-General, House of Representatives
Mr. Vassiliki Anostossiodou, Director, Parliamentary Committees Service, House of Representatives
Ms. Evie Hadjiyianni, Acting Director, International Relations Service, House of Representatives
Mr. Kombos Dionysios, Senior International Relations Officer, House of Representatives
Ms. Marina Adaminou, Senior International Relations Officer, House of Representatives
Mr. Neophytou Georgia, International Relations Officer, House of Representatives

Czech Republic
Mrs. Martina Kapounová, Third Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

Egypt
H.E. Mr. Ahmed Ragheb, Ambassador to Cyprus
Ms. Sherin Shahan, Third Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

France
H.E. Mr. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador to Cyprus
Mrs. Emmanuelle Blatmann, First Counsellor
Mr. Paul Houot, Trainee
Embassy in Nicosia

Georgia
H.E. Mr. Vladimer Konstantinidi, Ambassador to Cyprus
Ms. Ekaterine Lortkipanidze, First Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

Greece

Mr. Vassileious Katakaidis, First Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

Hungary
Mr. Endre Szabo, Counsellor
Embassy in Nicosia

Iran (Islamic Republic of)
H.E. Mr. Alireza Bikdeli, Ambassador to Cyprus
Mr. Ahmad Reza Daneshkhoh, Deputy Ambassador
Mr. Ebrahim Valipour, Deputy Head of Department for Persian Gulf Embassy in Nicosia

Italy
Dr. Massimo Carnelos, First Secretary
Dr. Luca Di Felice
Embassy in Nicosia

Jordan
Mr. Stavros Leptos
Consulate in Nicosia

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mr. Frag I.O. Salem, Assistant Secretary for Culture and Information
Embassy in Nicosia

Namibia
Hon. Nickey Nashandi, Member of Parliament
Mr. Mnasse C. Zereua, Principal Parliamentary Clerk
National Assembly, Windhoek

Nigeria
Mr. Folorunso Otukoya, Minister Plenipotentiary
Embassy in Tel Aviv
Portugal
H.E. Mr. Antonio Carvalho, Ambassador to Cyprus
Mr. Alexander Jesus, Chargé d'affaires, a.i.
Embassy in Nicosia

Qatar
Mr. Rashid Al-Dehaimi, Second Secretary
Fadi Hamra, Public Relations
Embassy in Nicosia

Romania
H.E. Mrs. Andreea Pastarnac, Ambassador to Cyprus
Embassy in Nicosia

Russian Federation
Mr. Alexander Shcherbakov, Minister Counsellor
Embassy in Nicosia

Serbia
Mr. Zorica Vucinić, First Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

Slovakia
H.E. Dr. Anna Tureničová, Ambassador to Cyprus
Embassy in Nicosia

Spain
H.E. Mr. Juan José Urtasun, Ambassador to Cyprus
Embassy in Nicosia

Sweden
H.E. Mr. Ingemar Lindahl, Ambassador to Cyprus
Mr. Fredrik Olson, First Secretary
Embassy in Nicosia

Ukraine
H.E. Mr. Oleksandr Demianiuk, Ambassador to Cyprus
Ms. Maryno Diomino, Third Secretary

Embassy in Nicosia

Viet Nam

H.E. Mr. Do Ba Khoa, Ambassador to Cyprus

Embassy in Nicosia

**Entities having received a standing invitation to participate
as Observers in the sessions and the work of the
General Assembly and maintaining Permanent
Observer Missions at Headquarters**

Palestine

H.E. Mr. Khalid M. Najjar, Representative to Cyprus

H.E. Mr. Abdalrahman Bsaiso, Ambassador

Mr. Rami Abdulmajid, First Secretary

Intergovernmental organizations

League of Arab States

Mrs. Suhair Bseiso

**Other entities having received a standing invitation
to participate as Observers in the sessions and the
work of the General Assembly and maintaining
Permanent offices at Headquarters**

Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Hon. Elissavet Papadimitriou

Vice-President

Athens

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

United Nations Development Programme

Mr. Jaco Cilliers, Programme Manager

Mr. Christopher Louise, Communications Manager

Mr. Pembe Mentesh, Programme Analyst

Nicosia

United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Ziad Yaish, Assistant Representative

Ramallah

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Ms. Cristina Planas, Representative

Nicosia

Civil society organizations accredited with the Committee

All-Ukrainian Party of Peace and Unit

Ms. Lyudmyla Yankovska, President

Kiev

Centro de Iniciativas de Cooperación

Mr. Rafael Marcos Aranda, Programs Director

Alcalá de Henares, Spain

Free Gaza Movement (FG Human Rights Project, Ltd.)

Ms. Huwaida Arraf, Board of Directors

Ms. Lubna Masarwa

International Solidarity Movement

Mr. Adam Shapiro, Co-founder

Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

Ms. Angela Godfrey-Goldstein, Action

Advocacy Officer

Jerusalem

Neda Institute for Scientific Political Research
Mr. Ahmad Soroush Nejad, Managing Director
Ms. Fatemeh Rezaei, Expert
Mr. Reza Asadi, Expert
Mr. Hossain Kozehegaran, Expert
Tehran
NGO Development Centre
Mr. Ghassan Salim Kasabreh, Director
Ramallah

Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
Mr. Raji K.M. Alsourani, Director
Mr. Jaber Wishah, Deputy Director
Gaza

Rebuilding Alliance
Ms. Sarah Williams, Board Chair
London

Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left – Greece)
Mr. Ioannis Baniias,
Athens

Women's International Democratic Federation
Ms. Skevi Koutra Koukouma, Vice-President
Mr. Michael Pasia Paraskevi, Member
Mr. Maro Karayianni, Member
Cyprus

World Federation of Democratic Youth
Mr. Sotiroula Yiasemi
EDON, Coordinator for Europe
Cyprus

Media

The Associated Press
Mr. Menelaos Hadjicostis, Correspondent
Mr. Petros Karadjias, Photojournalist
Nicosia

Astra
Ms. Maria Avraamidou

CYBC
Ms. Menelaos, Philippines
Mr. Christos Vatiliotis

Cyprus News Agency
Ms. Rebecah Gregoriades, Journalist
Mr. Gregoris Souva, Journalist
Mr. Elias Mavrolefalos, Journalist

Cyprus Weekly
Mr. Charlie Charalambour, Journalist
Mr. Stefanos Kouratzis, Photojournalist

The Irish Times
Ms. Michael Jansen, Middle East Analyst

Komsomolskaya Pravda
Mr. Antonov Kirill, Journalist
Nicosia

Mega Channel
Mr. Andreas Vassiliou, Cameraman

Plus TV
Mr. Leontios Christodoulou, Journalist

Mr. Stelios Nicolaou, Cameraman
Mr. Viannos Ioannou, Cameraman

Press and Information Office, Ministry of the Interior
Ms. Elena Kourtellaridou, Press Officer
Mr. Stavros Ioannides, Photographer

Reuters
Ms. Michele Pavlou-Kambas, Correspondent
Mr. Andreas Manolis, Correspondent
Ms. Sarah-Jane Ktisti, Journalist
Ms. Sarak Kristi, Photographer

Sigma TV
Mr. Constantinos Constantinou, Journalist
Mr. Nicolas Markantonis, Journalist
Mr. Michalis Kiprianides, Cameraman

Special guest

Mr. Firas Akram Khalaf Al-Adwan
Director of the Speaker's Office
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Ms. Aikaterini Alevizou
Associate Officer to the Hon. Papademetriou
Hellenic Parliament
Athens

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