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New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

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Address by Mr. Jalal Talabani, President of the Republic of Iraq

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Iraq is concerned about the tragic situation of the brotherly Palestinian people as a result of Israeli practices, which are incompatible with international laws, customs and international humanitarian law. Iraq is doing everything in its power to support the struggle of the Palestinian people to obtain all their inalienable rights, in particular the right to establish an independent State in its homeland, with its capital in Jerusalem.

In this regard, Iraq endorses and supports the path embarked on by the Palestinian Authority to come to the United Nations to achieve full international recognition of a Palestinian State during the current session of the General Assembly. Iraq calls on the international community and all peace-loving forces to stand by the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to achieve their goals and demands that the Israeli Government fully withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967. That would essentially contribute to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and bring a comprehensive and just peace to this vital region of the world.

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The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Czech Republic.

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Mr. Bowler (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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Nineteen years ago the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was negotiated peacefully from within, without any need for external mediation. Our experience tells us that if a solution to any country's aspirations to sovereignty and freedom, or a solution to a dispute among countries, is to be lasting and acceptable for the citizens of those countries, that solution must primarily come from within the region itself and from the negotiations of the countries concerned. In the same spirit, the Czech Republic is convinced, with regard to the most important issue of this session of the General Assembly, that it is necessary for the two sides in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute

to find a way forward themselves.

I agree with President Obama that there is no shortcut to ending a conflict that has endured for decades. It requires that both sides take an innovative approach and overcome some old, inflexible and rigid schemes of thought. It requires both sides to negotiate and to find a balanced solution that will last. Such a solution cannot come through unilateral steps, neither those forced by the United Nations nor the steps taken by one side of the dispute only.

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Address by Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, President of the Republic of El Salvador

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The unstable reality that we have experienced also takes the form of conflicts which, increasingly, call upon the indistinct arbiter, who goes by the name of the “international community” and which is represented here in the General Assembly better than anywhere else. In that regard I welcome the fact that one of the central themes of this session is the search for the peaceful settlement of conflicts and prevention strategies to cope with situations of instability. This shows us that the arbiter is growing stronger, as are the possibilities to prevent injustice and human rights abuses wherever they occur. The United Nations arose out of the global desire to avoid a new major conflict, and that spirit of peace and harmony must continue to guide us in our actions, even when the conflicts that we face currently are very different from the conflicts of the twentieth century. Indeed, we are living in a most diverse and complex world where there are no magical formulas or quick fixes but common responsibility, which is committed to finding new avenues for peacemaking and justice extending beyond our national borders.

That resolve must also translate into our quest for solutions to what is one of the oldest conflicts on this planet, and I am referring here to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As members know, my country recently decided to recognize the Palestinian State. This in no way seeks to undermine our good diplomatic relations with Israel. We are of the view that both peoples have the right and duty to coexist. Recognizing Palestine as a new State within the United Nations is, in my opinion, the right way to contribute to resolving the conflict. With this firm belief we support all diplomatic efforts that are aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of this long-standing conflict. We firmly believe that dialogue is the only possible solution, and our actions have always been guided by that principle.

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Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

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In the midst of uncertainty there are some things that must remain constant. They reflect our most cherished beliefs and convictions. Despite repeated references in this Assembly by many member countries to the right of the Palestinian people to a State of their own within secure borders, we still have not been able to make it a reality. It is a cause of profound disappointment that this has not yet happened. There is a window of opportunity now and we must make use of it before it is too late. It is time for decisive action rather than more discussion. That will be in the interest of the security and well-being of the entire region, including Israel.

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Address by Mr. Ismaël Omar Guelleh, President and Head of Government of the Republic of Djibouti

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Of course, we can only rejoice that a new Member has joined the Organization, but I could not mention the independence of South Sudan without recalling the situation that has prevailed in Palestine since 1947.

The very foundation of the United Nations consisted in fighting injustice and giving nations their sovereignty. Many countries here today, including mine, have at some point in their history found themselves here in search of independence. South Sudan became the 193rd Member State on 13 July. Palestine, for its part, continues to this day to live under occupation, which in this day and age is morally wrong and politically unsustainable.

We Africans know better than anyone the conditions in which colonized populations live. The fate experienced by the Palestinians for more than 60 years we have known, we have fought and we have overcome by obtaining the recognition of our peers. More than any other institution, for colonized peoples the United Nations represented hope: the hope for a better future, freed from the colonial yoke; the hope to live in one's own country, enjoying freedom and one's rights; the hope, above all, to regain dignity.

The time has come for us to give hope to our Palestinian brothers and sisters by recognizing their right to become a full-fledged State. It is time to end the siege, the poverty and the despair. History will remember, I hope, that on this day we decided to end the injustice and made the choice to finally give to Palestine a full place in the international community. History will especially remember that we have chosen not to disappoint the hopes of the fraternal people of Palestine.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

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With regard to Palestine, I reaffirm our full and unequivocal support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable right to self-determination and national independence. Namibia supports the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a full Member.

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Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly for this session. I wish you every success.

Today, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian people, I extend my sincere congratulations to the Government and the people of South Sudan on their deserved admission as a full Member of the United Nations. We wish them progress and prosperity.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his election for a new term at the helm of the United Nations. This renewal of trust reflects the world's appreciation for his efforts, which have strengthened the role of the Organization.

The question of Palestine is intricately linked with the United Nations through the resolutions adopted by its various organs and agencies and through the essential and lauded role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA embodies the international responsibility with regard to the plight of Palestine's refugees, who are the victims of Al-Nakba, the catastrophe that occurred in 1948.

We aspire to and seek a greater and more effective role for the United Nations in working to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in our region, one that ensures the inalienable, legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people as defined by the resolutions of international legitimacy and as embodied by the United Nations.

A year ago, on this same occasion and in this same Hall, many leaders and heads of delegations addressed the stalled peace efforts in our region. Everyone had high hopes for a new round of final status negotiations, which had begun in early September in Washington under the direct auspices of President Obama and with participation of the Quartet, Egypt and Jordan, to reach a peace agreement within one year. We entered those negotiations with open hearts and attentive ears and sincere intentions. We were ready with our documents, files, papers and proposals. But the negotiations broke down just weeks after they were launched.

After that, we did not give up and did not cease our efforts to craft initiatives and make contacts. Over the past year, we did not leave a door to be knocked on or a channel to be tested or a path to be taken. We did not ignore any formal or informal party of influence and stature that could be addressed. We considered positively the various ideas and proposals and initiatives presented by many countries and parties. But all of those sincere efforts and endeavours by international parties were repeatedly smashed against the rocks of the positions of the Israeli Government, which quickly dashed the hopes raised by the launch of negotiations last September.

The core issue here is that the Israeli Government refuses to commit to terms of reference for the negotiations that are based on international law and United Nations resolutions, and that it frantically continues to intensify the building of settlements on the territory of the future State of Palestine.

Settlement activities embody the core of the policy of colonial military occupation of the land of the Palestinian people and all of the brutality, aggression and racial discrimination against our people that that policy entails. The policy constitutes a breach of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions. It is the primary cause of the failure of the peace process, the collapse of dozens of opportunities and the burial of the great hopes that arose from the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to achieve a just peace that would begin a new era for our region.

Reports by United Nations missions and by several Israeli civil institutions and societies convey a horrific picture of the size of the settlement campaign, which the Israeli Government does not hesitate to boast about and which it continues to execute through the systematic confiscation of Palestinian lands. It invites tenders for the construction of thousands of new settlement units in various areas of the West Bank, particularly in the Arab parts of Jerusalem. It accelerates construction of the apartheid separation Wall that is eating up large tracts of our land, dividing it into separate and isolated islands, destroying family life and communities and harming the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinian families.

The occupying Power also continues to refuse to issue permits for our people to build in occupied East Jerusalem. At the same time, it intensifies its decades-long campaign of demolition and confiscation of homes, displacing Palestinian owners and residents under a multipronged policy of ethnic cleansing aimed at pushing Palestinians away from their ancestral homeland. Moreover, matters have reached the point where orders have been issued to deport elected representatives from their city of Jerusalem.

The occupying Power also continues to undertake excavations that threaten our Holy Places, and its military checkpoints prevent our citizens from gaining access to their mosques and churches. It continues to besiege the Holy City with a ring of settlements and a separation Wall imposed to separate the Holy City from the rest of the cities of Palestine. The occupation is racing against time to redraw the borders on our land according to what it wants and to impose a fait accompli on the ground that changes its realities and features and that is undermining the realistic potential for the establishment of the State of Palestine.

At the same time, the occupying Power continues to impose its strict blockade on the Gaza Strip and to target Palestinian civilians by assassinations, air strikes and artillery shelling. It persists with its war of aggression of three years ago on Gaza, which resulted then in the massive destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and mosques and thousands of martyrs and wounded. The occupying Power also continues its incursions into areas of the Palestinian National Authority through raids, arrests and killings at the checkpoints.

In recent years, the criminal actions of armed settler militias, who enjoy the special protection of the occupation army, have intensified. They have perpetrated frequent attacks against our people, targeting their homes, schools, universities, mosques, fields, crops and trees. Today they killed one Palestinian who was protesting peacefully. Despite our repeated warnings, the Israeli authorities have not acted to curb those attacks, and we hold them fully responsible for the crimes of the settlers.

Those are just a few examples of the policy of the Israeli settlement occupation. That policy is responsible for the repeated failure of the successive international attempts to salvage the peace process. The policy will destroy the chances of achieving a two-State solution, upon which there is an international consensus. Here I caution, and I caution aloud, that the settlement policy threatens also to undermine the structure of the Palestinian National Authority and even to end its existence.

In addition, we now face new conditions not previously imposed, conditions that will transform the raging conflict in our inflamed region into a religious conflict, one that will be a threat to the future of a million and a half Palestinians who are citizens of Israel. We reject that eventuality; it is impossible for us to accept being dragged into it.

All of those unilateral Israeli actions in our country are aimed at perpetuating the occupation. Israel has re-established the civil and military authority in the West Bank by a unilateral action, and its military authorities determine whether or not a Palestinian citizen has the right to reside in any part of the Palestinian territory. Israel is the entity that decides to confiscate our land and our water and to obstruct our movement and the movement of goods, and indeed our whole destiny. All of that is unilateral. Yet Israel complains of unilateralism — despite our agreements with it, which forbid unilateral individual actions.

In 1974, our leader the late Yasser Arafat came to this Hall and assured the members of the General Assembly of our affirmative pursuit for peace, urging the United Nations to realize the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, stating: "Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand." (*A/PV.2282, para. 82*)

In 1988, President Arafat again addressed the General Assembly, which convened in Geneva to hear him. There he submitted the Palestinian peace programme adopted by the Palestine National Council at its session held that year in Algeria. When we adopted that programme, we were taking a painful and very difficult step for all of us, especially those of us, including myself, who during the 1948 Al-Nakba were forced to leave their homes and their towns and villages, carrying only some of our belongings — along with our grief and our memories and the keys to our homes — to camps of exile and diaspora. That catastrophic exodus was one of the worst operations of uprooting, destruction and removal of a vibrant and cohesive society that had been contributing in a pioneering and leading way to the cultural, educational and economic renaissance of the Arab Middle East.

Still, because we believe in peace, because of our commitment to international legitimacy and because we had the courage to make difficult decisions for our people, and in the absence of absolute justice, we decided to adopt the path of relative justice, justice that is possible and could correct part of the grave historical injustice committed against our people. Thus, we agreed to establish the State of Palestine on only 22 per cent of the territory of historical Palestine — on all the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967. By taking that historic step, which was welcomed by the States of the world, we made a major concession in order to achieve a historic compromise that would allow peace to be made in the land of peace.

In the years that followed, from the Madrid Conference and the Washington negotiations leading to the Oslo agreement, which we signed 18 years ago in the White House garden and which was linked with the letters of mutual recognition — mutual recognition — between the PLO and Israel, we persevered and dealt positively and responsibly with all efforts aimed at the achievement of a lasting peace agreement. Yet, as we said earlier, every initiative, every conference, every new round of

negotiations and every movement was shattered on the rock of the Israeli settlement expansion project.

On behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization — the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, which will remain so until the end of the conflict in all its aspects and until the resolution of all final status issues — I affirm the following points.

The goal of the Palestinian people is the realization of their inalienable national rights and of their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on all the land of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, which Israel occupied in the June 1967 war. This goal must be realized in conformity with the resolutions of international legitimacy and with the achievement of a just and agreed-upon solution to the Palestine refugee issue in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative. That Initiative presented the consensus Arab and Islamic vision to resolve the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to achieve the just and comprehensive peace to which we are committed and are working towards.

We are committed to this. Achieving this much-desired peace also requires the release of political prisoners, prisoners of freedom and Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons without delay.

Secondly, the PLO and the Palestinian people are committed to renouncing violence and reject and condemn terrorism in all its forms, especially State terrorism, including terrorism by settlers. We also adhere to all agreements signed between the PLO and Israel.

Thirdly, we are committed to the option of negotiating a lasting solution to the conflict in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. I affirm here that the Palestine Liberation Organization is ready to return immediately to the negotiating table on the basis of the adopted terms of reference and consistent with international legitimacy and a complete cessation of settlement activities.

Fourthly, our people will continue their popular peaceful resistance to the Israeli occupation, its settlement and apartheid policies, and its construction of the racist separation Wall, and they receive support for their resistance that is consistent with international humanitarian law and international conventions. They have the support of peace activists from Israel and around the world, reflecting an impressive, inspiring and courageous example of the strength of this defenceless people, armed only with their dreams, courage, hope and slogans in the face of bullets, tanks, tear gas and bulldozers.

Fifthly, when we bring our plight and our case to this international forum, it is a confirmation of our reliance on the political and diplomatic option and is a confirmation of the fact that we do not undertake unilateral steps. Our efforts and moves are not aimed at isolating Israel or at delegitimizing it; rather, we want to gain legitimacy for the cause of the people of Palestine. We aim to delegitimize only the settlement activities, the occupation and apartheid and the logic of ruthless force, and we believe that all the countries of the world stand with us in this regard.

I am here to say on behalf of the Palestinian people and the Palestine Liberation Organization that we extend our hand to the Israeli Government and the Israeli people for peacemaking. I say to them: let us urgently build together a future for our children where they can enjoy freedom, security and prosperity. Let us build bridges of dialogue instead of checkpoints and walls of separation. Let us build cooperative relations based on parity, equity and friendship between two neighbouring States — Palestine and Israel — instead of policies based on occupation, settlement, war and elimination of the other.

Despite the unquestionable right of our people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State, as stipulated in international resolutions, we have accepted over the past few years to engage in what appeared to be a test of our worthiness, entitlement and eligibility. During the past two years, our national Authority has implemented a programme to build our State institutions. Despite the extraordinary situation and the obstacles imposed on us by Israel, a serious and extensive project was launched that has included the implementation of plans to enhance and advance the judiciary and the apparatus for the maintenance of order and security; the development of administrative, financial and oversight systems; the upgrading of the performance of institutions; and enhancing self-reliance to reduce the need for foreign aid.

With the support of brotherly Arab countries and donors from friendly countries, for which we are thankful, a number of large infrastructure projects have been implemented, focused on various aspects of services, with special attention to rural and marginalized areas. In the midst of this massive national project, we have been strengthening what we wish to be the features of our future State: the preservation of security for citizens and public order; the promotion of judicial authority and the rule of law; strengthening the role of women via legislation, laws and participation; ensuring the protection of public freedoms and strengthening the role of civil society institutions; and institutionalizing rules and regulations for ensuring accountability and transparency in the work of our ministries and departments; to entrenching the pillars of democracy as the basis of Palestinian political life.

When division struck the unity of our homeland, our people and our institutions, we were determined to adopt dialogue as a path to the restoration of our unity. We succeeded months ago in achieving national reconciliation, and we hope that its implementation will be accelerated in the coming weeks. The core pillar of this reconciliation involved turning to the people through legislative and presidential elections, to be conducted within a year, because the State we want is one characterized by the rule of law, the exercise of democracy, the protection of the freedoms and equality of all citizens without any discrimination, and the transfer of power through the ballot box.

We believe that the reports issued recently by the United Nations, the World Bank, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) and the International Monetary Fund have confirmed and lauded what has been accomplished, and have considered it an exceptional and unprecedented model. The consensus conclusion of the AHLC a few days ago here, in this very city, described what has been accomplished as a remarkable international success story and confirmed the full readiness of the Palestinian people and their institutions for the immediate independence of the State of Palestine. That was a testimonial from the international community.

I do not believe that anyone with even a shred of conscience could reject our application for full membership in the United Nations and our admission as an independent State.

It is no longer possible to redress the issue of the blocked horizon of the peace talks with the same means and methods that have been repeatedly tried and have proved unsuccessful in past years.

The crisis is far too deep to be neglected; it is far more dangerous and critical to simply be circumvented or to postpone its inevitable explosion. It is neither possible, nor practical nor acceptable to return to conducting business as usual, as if everything were fine. It is futile to go into negotiations without clear parameters, terms of reference, credibility or a specific timetable. Negotiations will be meaningless as long as the occupation army on the ground continues to entrench its occupation instead of rolling it back, and to change the demography of our country in order to create a new basis on which to alter the borders. That is totally unacceptable.

This is the moment of truth. Our people are waiting to hear the world's answer. Will it allow Israel to continue the last occupation in the world? We are the last people to remain under occupation. Will the world allow Israel to occupy us forever and to remain a State above the law and accountability? Will it allow Israel to continue rejecting the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice and the positions of the overwhelming majority of countries in the world? Is this acceptable?

The heart of the crisis in our region is very simple and clear. There are those who believe that we are an unnecessary people in the Middle East and those who believe that there is in fact a missing State that needs to be established immediately. I come before the General Assembly today from the Holy Land, the land of Palestine, the land of divine messages, ascension of the Prophet Muhammad and the birthplace of Jesus Christ, to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people, in the homeland and in the diaspora, and to say, after 63 years of suffering the ongoing Al-Nakba: enough, enough, enough.

It is time for the Palestinian people to gain their freedom and independence. The time has come to end the suffering and the plight of millions of Palestinian refugees in the homeland and the diaspora, some of whom have been forced to seek refuge more than once in different places of the world, to end their displacement, and to realize their rights.

At a time when the Arab peoples affirm their quest for democracy — in what is now called the Arab Spring — the time has also come for the Palestinian Spring, the time for independence. The time has come for our men, women and children to live normal lives; for them to be able to sleep without waiting for the worst that the next day might bring; for mothers to be assured that their children will return home without fear of being killed, arrested or humiliated; for students to be able to go to their schools and universities without checkpoints obstructing them.

The time has come for sick people to be able to reach hospitals normally, and for our farmers to be able to tend their rich soil without fear that the occupier will seize their land and water, which the separation wall prevents access to, and without fear of the settlers with their guard dogs who attack Palestinians. They build their settlements on our lands and uproot and burn olive trees that have existed in Palestine for hundreds of years. The time has come for the thousands of prisoners of conscience and freedom to be released from prisons and return to their families and their children and become a part of building their homeland, for the freedom of which they have sacrificed so much.

My people want to exercise their right to enjoy a normal life like the rest of humankind. They believe in what our great poet Mahmoud Darwish said: "Standing here,

staying here, permanent here, eternal here, and we have one goal, one goal, one goal — to be. And we shall be.”

We profoundly appreciate and value the positions of all the States that have supported our struggle and our rights and recognized the State of Palestine following the Declaration of Independence in 1988, as well as those that have recently recognized the State of Palestine and upgraded the level of Palestine’s representation in their capitals. I also salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who spoke the truth a few days ago when he said that the Palestinian State should have been established years ago.

The General Assembly may rest assured that such support for our people is more valuable to them than anyone can imagine, for it makes them feel that someone is listening to their narrative and that their tragedy, the horrors of Al-Nakba and the occupation, under which they have suffered terribly, are not being ignored. It reinforces their hope and belief that justice is possible in this world. The loss of hope is the most ferocious enemy of peace, and despair is the strongest ally of extremism.

The time has come for my courageous and proud people, after decades of displacement, colonial occupation and ceaseless suffering, to live like other peoples of the Earth, free in a sovereign and independent homeland.

Mr. President, I would like to inform you that, before delivering this statement, I, in my capacity as President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, submitted to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon an application for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

I hold in my hands a copy of the application. I call upon the Secretary-General to expedite transmittal of our request to the Security Council, and I call upon the members of the Council to vote in favour of our full membership. I also appeal to the States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine.

The support of the countries of the world for our endeavour is a victory for rights, freedom, justice, law and international legitimacy. It will provide tremendous support for the peace option and enhance the negotiations’ chances of success. The Assembly’s assistance and support for the establishment of the State of Palestine and for its admission to the United Nations as a full Member State are the greatest contribution to peacemaking in the land of peace, and throughout the world.

I have come here today carrying a message from a courageous and proud people. Palestine is experiencing its rebirth. That is my message. May all the people of the world stand with the people of Palestine now as they march steadfastly to meet their appointment with history, freedom and independence. And I hope that we will not have long to wait.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan

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Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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... As Middle East peace represents the linchpin for the peace and stability of the region, Japan will make active efforts, such as extending assistance to the Palestinians, for the realization of the two-State solution.

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Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): Israel has extended its hand in peace from the moment it was established 63 years ago. On behalf of Israel and the Jewish people, I extend that hand again today. I extend it to the people of Egypt and Jordan, with renewed friendship for neighbours with whom we have made peace. I extend it to the people of Turkey, with respect and goodwill. I extend it to the people of Libya and Tunisia, with admiration for those trying to build a democratic future. I extend it to the other peoples of North Africa and the Arabian peninsula, with whom we want to forge a new beginning. I extend it to the people of Syria, Lebanon and Iran, with awe at the courage of those fighting brutal repression.

Most especially, I extend my hand to the Palestinian people, with whom we seek a just and lasting peace.

In Israel, our hope for peace never wanes. Our scientists, doctors and innovators apply their genius to improving the world of tomorrow. Our artists and our writers enrich the heritage of humanity. Now, I know that this is not exactly the image of Israel that is often portrayed in this Hall. After all, it was here in 1975 that the age-old yearning of my people to restore our national life in our ancient biblical homeland was branded, shamefully, as racism. It was right here in 1980 that the historic peace agreement between Israel and Egypt was not praised, but denounced. It is here, year after year, that Israel is unjustly singled out for condemnation. It is singled out for condemnation more often than all the nations of the world combined. Twenty-one out of 27 relevant General Assembly resolutions condemn Israel, the one true democracy in the Middle East.

This is an unfortunate part of the United Nations institution. It is the theatre of the absurd. It not only casts Israel as the villain, it often casts real villains in leading roles. Al-Qadhafi’s Libya chaired the Commission on Human Rights. Saddam’s Iraq headed the Conference on Disarmament.

One might say that is the past. Well, here is what is happening now — right now, today. Hizbullah-controlled Lebanon now presides over the Security Council. This means, in effect, that a terror organization presides over the body entrusted with guaranteeing the world’s security. One could not make this up. Here in the United Nations, automatic majorities can decide anything. They can decide that the sun rises in the west. They can also decide — they have decided — that the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Judaism’s holiest place, is occupied Palestinian territory.

Yet, even here in the General Assembly, the truth can sometimes break through. In 1984, when I was appointed Israel’s Ambassador to the United Nations, I visited the great rabbi of Lubavitch. He said to me — and I do not want anyone here to be offended, because from personal experience of serving here, I know there are many honourable men and women, many capable and decent people, serving their nations here — but here is what the rebbe said to me. He said, “You will be serving in a house of many lies”. And then he said, “Remember that, even in the darkest place, the light of a single candle can be seen far and wide”. Today I hope that the light of truth will shine, if only for a few minutes, in a Hall that for too long has been a place of darkness for my country.

As Israel’s Prime Minister, I did not come here to win applause. I came here to speak the truth. The truth is that Israel wants peace. The truth is that I want peace. The truth is that in the Middle East, at all times but especially during these turbulent days, peace must be anchored in security. The truth is that we can achieve peace not through United Nations resolutions, but only through direct negotiations between the parties. The truth is that so far the Palestinians have refused to negotiate. The truth is that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian State, but the Palestinians want a State without peace. The truth is that the Assembly should not let that happen.

When I first came here 27 years ago, the world was divided between East and West. Since then, the Cold War ended, great civilizations have risen from centuries of slumber, hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty, countless more are poised to follow, and the remarkable thing is that, so far, this monumental historic shift has largely occurred peacefully.

Yet a malignancy is now growing between East and West that threatens the peace of all. It seeks not to liberate, but to enslave; not to build, but to destroy. That malignancy is militant Islam. It cloaks itself in the mantle of a great faith, yet it murders Jews, Christians and Muslims alike with unforgiving impartiality. On 11 September 2001, it killed thousands of Americans and left the twin towers in smouldering ruins. Last night, I laid a wreath on the 9/11 memorial. It was deeply moving. However, as I was going there, one thing echoed in my mind: the outrageous words of the President of Iran at this rostrum yesterday. He implied that 9/11 was an American conspiracy. Some left this Hall; everyone should have.

Since 9/11, militant Islamists have slaughtered countless other innocents in London and Madrid, in Baghdad and Mumbai, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and in every part of Israel. I believe that the greatest danger facing our world is that this fanaticism will arm itself with nuclear weapons, and that is precisely what Iran is trying to do. Can we imagine that man who ranted here yesterday armed with nuclear weapons?

The international community must stop Iran before it is too late. If Iran is not stopped, we will all face the spectre of nuclear terrorism, and the Arab Spring could soon become an Iranian winter. That would be a tragedy. Millions of Arabs have taken to the streets to replace tyranny with liberty, and no one would benefit more than Israel if those committed to freedom and peace would prevail.

That is my fervent hope, but as the Prime Minister of Israel, I cannot risk the future of the Jewish State on wishful thinking. Leaders must see reality as it is, not as it ought to be. We must do our best to shape the future, but we cannot wish away the dangers of the present.

The world around Israel is definitely becoming more dangerous. Militant Islam has already taken over Lebanon and Gaza. It is determined to tear apart the peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan. It has poisoned many Arab minds against Jews and Israel, and against America and the West. It opposes not the policies of Israel but the existence of Israel.

Now, some argue that if we want to slow down the spread of militant Islam, especially in these turbulent times, Israel must hurry to make concessions, including territorial compromises. And this theory sounds simple. Basically it goes like this: leave the territory and peace will be advanced. The moderates will be strengthened; the radicals will be kept at bay. And do not worry about the pesky details of how Israel will actually defend itself; international troops will do the job.

These people say to me constantly, "Just make a sweeping offer, and everything will work out". There is only one problem with that theory. We have tried it and it has not worked. In 2000, Israel made a sweeping peace offer that met virtually all the Palestinian demands. Chairman Arafat rejected it. The Palestinians then launched a terror attack that claimed 1,000 Israeli lives.

In 2008, Prime Minister Olmert afterwards made an even more sweeping offer. President Abbas did not even respond to it. But Israel did more than just make sweeping offers. We actually left territory. We withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 and from every square inch of Gaza in 2005. That did not calm the militant Islamic storm that threatens us. It only brought the storm closer and made it stronger. Hizbullah and Hamas fired thousands of rockets against our cities from the very territories we had vacated.

When Israel left Lebanon and Gaza, the moderates did not defeat the radicals; the moderates were devoured by the radicals. And I regret to say that international troops, including those of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Gaza, did not stop the radicals from attacking Israel.

We left Gaza hoping for peace. We did not freeze the settlements in Gaza; we uprooted them. We did exactly what the theory says. We got out, went back to the 1967 borders and dismantled the settlements. I do not think people remember how far we went to achieve this. We uprooted thousands of people from their homes. We pulled children out of their schools and their kindergartens. We bulldozed synagogues. We even moved loved ones from their graves. And then, having done all that, we gave the keys of Gaza to President Abbas.

The theory says that it should have all worked out, and that President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority could now build a peaceful state in Gaza. We all remember that the entire world applauded our withdrawal as an act of great statesmanship and a bold act of peace. But we did not get peace. We got war. We got Iran, which, through its proxy, Hamas, promptly kicked out the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority collapsed in a day — in one day.

President Abbas just said from this rostrum that the Palestinians are armed only with their hopes and dreams. Yes, they are armed with their hopes, dreams and 10,000 missiles and Grad rockets supplied by Iran, not to mention the river of lethal weapons now flowing into Gaza from the Sinai, from Libya and from elsewhere.

Thousands of missiles have already rained down on our cities. So it might be understood, given all this, why Israelis rightly ask, "What is to prevent this from happening again in the West Bank?" Most of the major cities in the south of our country are within a few dozen kilometres from Gaza, but in the centre of the country opposite the West Bank, our cities are a few hundred metres or at most a few kilometres from the edge of the West Bank.

So I want to ask: Would anyone here bring danger so close to their cities and families? Would they act so recklessly with the lives of their citizens? Israel is prepared to have a Palestinian State in the West Bank, but we are not prepared to have another Gaza there. And that is why we need to have real security arrangements, which the Palestinians simply refuse to negotiate with us.

Israelis remember the bitter lessons of Gaza. Many of Israel's critics ignore them. They irresponsibly advise Israel to go down this same perilous path again. We read what these people say and it is as if nothing happened. They just repeat the same advice and the same formulas as though none of this happened. And these critics continue to press Israel to make far-reaching concessions without first assuring Israel's security. They praise those who unwittingly feed the insatiable crocodile of militant Islam as bold statesmen. They cast as enemies of peace those of us who insist that we must first erect a sturdy barrier to keep the crocodile out, or at the very least jam an iron bar between its gaping jaws.

So in the face of the labels and the libels, Israel must heed better advice. It is better to receive bad press than a good eulogy, and better still would be a fair press whose sense of history extends beyond breakfast and that recognizes Israel's legitimate security concerns. I believe that in serious peace negotiations, these needs and concerns can be properly addressed, but they will not be addressed without negotiations.

And the needs are many, because Israel is such a tiny country. Without Judea and Samaria — the West Bank — Israel is all of nine miles wide. I want to put that in perspective for all of us in this city. It is about two-thirds the length of Manhattan. It is the distance between Battery Park and Columbia University. And let us not forget that the people who live in Brooklyn and New Jersey are considerably nicer than some of Israel's neighbours.

So how does one protect such a tiny country, surrounded by people sworn to its destruction and armed to the teeth by Iran? Obviously, one cannot defend it from within that narrow space alone. Israel needs greater strategic depth, and that is exactly why Security Council resolution 242 (1967) did not require Israel to leave all of the territories it captured in the Six-Day War. It talked about withdrawal from territories to secure and defensible boundaries. And to defend itself, Israel must therefore maintain a long-term Israeli military presence in critical strategic areas in the West Bank.

I explained this to President Abbas. He answered that if a Palestinian State was to be a sovereign country, it could never accept such arrangements. Why not? The United States has had troops in Japan, Germany and South Korea for more than a half a century. Britain has an air base in Cyprus. France has forces in three independent African nations. None of those States claim that they are not sovereign countries.

There are many other vital security issues that also must be addressed. Take the issue of airspace. Again, Israel's small dimensions create huge security problems. The United States can be crossed by jet airplane in six hours. To fly across Israel, it takes three minutes. So is Israel's tiny airspace to be chopped in half and given to a Palestinian State not at peace with Israel?

Our major international airport is a few kilometres from the West Bank. Without peace, will our planes become targets for anti-aircraft missiles placed in the adjacent Palestinian State? And how will we stop the smuggling into the West Bank? It is not merely the West Bank; it is the West Bank mountains, which dominate the coastal plain below where most of Israel's population sits. How could we prevent the smuggling into those mountains of missiles that could be fired at our cities?

I bring up these problems because they are not theoretical problems. They are very real, and for Israelis, they are life-and-death matters. All of these potential cracks in Israel's security have to be sealed in a peace agreement before a Palestinian State is declared, not afterwards, because if it is left until afterwards they will not be sealed. And these problems will explode in our face and explode the peace.

The Palestinians should first make peace with Israel and then get their State. But I also want to say this. After such a peace agreement is signed, Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian State as a new Member of the United Nations. We will be the first.

There is one more thing. Hamas has been violating international law by holding our soldier Gilad Shalit captive for five years. They have not allowed even one Red Cross visit. He is held in a dungeon, in darkness, against all international norms. Gilad Shalit is the son of Aviva and Noam Shalit. He is the grandson of Zvi Shalit,

who escaped the Holocaust by coming to the land of Israel as a boy in the 1930s. Gilad Shalit is the son of every Israeli family. Every nation represented here should demand his immediate release. If we want to adopt a resolution about the Middle East today, that is the resolution we should adopt.

Last year in Israel at Bar-Ilan University, and this year in the Knesset and the United States Congress, I laid out my vision for peace, in which a demilitarized Palestinian State recognizes the Jewish State. Yes, the Jewish State. After all, this is the body that recognized the Jewish State 64 years ago. Now, does the Assembly not think that it is about time that Palestinians did the same?

The Jewish State of Israel will always protect the rights of all of its minorities, including the more than 1 million Arab citizens of Israel. I wish I could say the same thing about a future Palestinian State, for as Palestinian officials made clear the other day — in fact, I think they did so right here in New York — the Palestinian State would not allow any Jews. They would be Jew-free — *Judenrein*. That is ethnic cleansing. There are laws today in Ramallah that make the selling of land to Jews punishable by death. That is racism. And the Assembly knows which laws this evokes.

Israel has no intention whatsoever of changing the democratic character of our State. We just do not want the Palestinians to try to change the Jewish character of our State. We want them to give up the fantasy of flooding Israel with millions of Palestinians.

President Abbas just stood here and said that the settlements lie at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Well, that is odd. Our conflict was raging for nearly half a century before there was a single Israeli settlement in the West Bank. So, if what President Abbas is saying was true, then I guess that the settlements he is talking about are Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jaffa and Be'er Sheva. Maybe that is what he meant the other day when he said that Israel had been occupying Palestinian land for 63 years. He did not say from 1967; he said from 1948.

I hope that somebody will bother to ask him this question, because it illustrates a simple truth. The core of the conflict is not the settlements; the settlements are a result of the conflict. The settlements are an issue that has to be addressed and resolved in the course of negotiations. But the core of the conflict has always been, and unfortunately remains, the refusal of the Palestinians to recognize a Jewish State within any border.

I think it is time that the Palestinian leadership recognize what every serious international leader from Lord Balfour and David Lloyd George in 1917, to President Truman in 1948, to President Obama just two days ago right here, has recognized — that Israel is the Jewish State.

I would ask President Abbas to stop walking around this issue, recognize the Jewish State, and make peace with us. In such a genuine peace, Israel is prepared to make painful compromises. We believe that the Palestinians should be neither the citizens of Israel nor its subjects. They should live in a free State of their own. But they should be ready, like us, for compromise. And we will know that they are ready for compromise and peace when they start taking Israel's security requirements seriously and when they stop denying our historical connection to our ancient homeland. I often hear them accuse Israel of Judaizing Jerusalem. That is like accusing America of Americanizing Washington, D.C., or the British of Anglicizing London. Why are we called Jews? Because we come from Judea.

In my office in Jerusalem, there is an ancient seal. It is a signet ring of a Jewish official from the time of the Bible. The seal was found right next to the Western Wall and it dates back 2,700 years to the time of King Hezekiah. Now, the name of a Jewish official is inscribed on the ring in Hebrew. His name was Netanyahu. That is my last name. My first name, Benjamin, can be traced back a 1,000 years to Benjamin — Binyamin — the son of Jacob, who was also known as Israel. Jacob and his 12 sons roamed these same hills of Judea and Samaria 4,000 years ago, and there has been a continuous Jewish presence in the land ever since.

Those Jews who were exiled from our land — Jews in Spain, on the eve of their expulsion; Jews in Ukraine, fleeing the pogroms; Jews fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto, as the Nazis were circling around it — never stopped dreaming of coming back. They never stopped praying, they never stopped yearning. They whispered: "Next year in Jerusalem. Next year in the promised land".

As the Prime Minister of Israel, I speak for a hundred generations of Jews who were dispersed throughout the lands and suffered every evil under the sun, but who never gave up hope of restoring their national life in the one and only Jewish State.

I continue to hope that President Abbas will be my partner in peace. I have worked hard to advance that peace. The day I came into office, I called for direct negotiations without preconditions. President Abbas did not respond. I outlined a vision of peace of two States for two peoples. He still did not respond. I removed hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints to ease freedom of movement in the Palestinian areas. This facilitated fantastic growth in the Palestinian economy. But again, there was no response. I took the unprecedented step of freezing new building in the settlements for 10 months. No Prime Minister had done that before, ever. Once again, I hear applause, but there was no response. No response.

In the past few weeks, American officials have put forward ideas to restart peace talks. There were things in those ideas about borders that I did not like. There were things there about the Jewish State that I am sure the Palestinians did not like. But despite all of my reservations, I was willing to move forward on those American ideas. Why does President Abbas not join me? We have to stop negotiating about the negotiations. Let us just get on with it. Let us negotiate peace.

I spent years defending Israel on the battlefield. I spent decades defending Israel in the court of public opinion. President Abbas has dedicated his life to advancing the Palestinian cause. Must this conflict continue for generations, or will we enable our children and our grandchildren to speak in the years ahead of how we found a way to end it? That is what we should aim for, and that is what I believe we can achieve.

In two and a half years, President Abbas and I have met in Jerusalem only once, even though my door has always been open to him. If he wishes, I will come to Ramallah. Actually, I have a better suggestion. We have both just flown thousands of miles to New York. Now we are in the same city; we are in the same building. So let us meet here today, at the United Nations. Who is there to stop us? What is there to stop us? If we genuinely want peace, what is there to stop us from meeting today and beginning peace negotiations?

I suggest that we talk openly and honestly. Let us listen to one another. Let us, as we say in the Middle East, talk *dugri*. That means "straightforward". I will tell him my needs and concerns; he will tell me his. And with God's help, we will find the common ground of peace.

There is an old Arab saying that one cannot applaud with one hand. Well, the same is true of peace. I cannot make peace alone. I cannot make peace without an interlocutor. President Abbas, I extend my hand — the hand of Israel — in peace. I hope that he will grasp that hand. We are both the sons of Abraham. My people call him Avraham; his people call him Ibrahim. We share the same patriarch. We dwell in the same land. Our destinies are intertwined. Let us realize the vision of Isaiah: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light". (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 9:2*). Let that light be the light of peace.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden

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The European Union is firmly committed to Israel and a Palestinian State living side by side with each other in peace and security. We all want to see the peace process resume. Violations of international law must cease. Only then can a true and lasting peace be achieved.

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The meeting rose at 2.25 p.m.

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