



General Assembly GA/PAL/1210

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
335th Meeting (AM)

MOST IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY PERSUADED TO 'ACTUALIZE ENDGAME OF

TWO-STATE SOLUTION', NOW UP TO SECURITY COUNCIL, PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE TOLD

Secretary-General's Swift Transfer of Bid to Council Means It Was Impeccable, Says Palestine's Observer, Proclaiming Palestinians Ready to Govern Themselves

Following the historic submission on 23 September of the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations, it was time for the natural, historic and legal right of the Palestinians to join the community of nations to be granted, Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, told the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People today.

"The application ushered in the beginning of the Palestinian Spring," Mr. Mansour said, underlining that it was a peaceful but clear statement that the Palestinian people could no longer tolerate occupation. "Occupation has to end now. This is the time for our independence. This is the time for our membership."

He said that the application was based on the widespread recognition that the Palestinians' successful two-year State-building programme received from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations and others, as well as the assessment by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in Brussels in June and in September in New York that "we are ready to govern ourselves".

In an indication that the application was "impeccable," he said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, within an hour of receiving it, had passed it on to the President of the Security Council. The application, in turn, had been immediately distributed to Council members, and, in a unanimous action on 28 September, the Council had moved both to include the application on its agenda and to refer it to its Committee on the Admission of New Members. Furthermore, the Council was holding informal talks right now on Palestine's membership application.

"We hope the Security Council will shoulder its responsibility and will not deny us," Mr. Mansour said, arguing that by convincing 129 countries to "invest in peace" by recognizing Palestine — and with two additional countries set to announce their recognition in the coming days — the Palestinians had persuaded a majority of the international community "to actualize the endgame of the two-State solution".

He said that, while one very powerful country in the Council had assured the Palestinians both in open and closed meetings that it would wield its veto to prevent Palestine's full membership, everything must be done to expand the number of Council members favouring it. At this point, the Palestinians were not dwelling on any alternate path through the General Assembly and would only consider such a route if events dictated they must.

Turning to the statement issued on 23 September by the Middle East Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States and European Union), he said the Palestinian leadership's response amounted neither to enthusiastic support nor enthusiastic rejection. Despite many vague statements that required clarification, the Quartet statement included elements that could be expanded on. However, the Palestinian Authority had made clear that, accepting the principle of land swaps, the 1967 borders were the basis for their negotiating terms, and a full settlement freeze was required for talks to take place. If paragraph 5 of the Quartet's statement referred to those terms — and if the Israelis accepted that understanding — there was a possibility for negotiations.

Unfortunately, however, the Israeli Government responded to the statement, not in words, but in deeds, authorizing the construction of 1,100 houses. He stressed that this answer was a rejection of the Quartet statement, as well as of the Road Map, which also required a settlement freeze. "They are closing the doors and windows of negotiations before the possibility of taking the first step," he said, underscoring that the Palestinian Authority would not relent on the issue and that the international community must find collective ways to force Israel to abide by international law.

Earlier, Committee Chairman Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal) outlined recent developments since the Committee's last meeting on 27 July, noting that the Israeli Government had accelerated its settlement expansion into the West Bank and East Jerusalem. On 4 August, it approved the construction of 900 new homes in

the “Har Homa” settlement, while on 11 August, final approval was given for 1,600 new homes in the “Ramat Shlomo” settlement. Further authorizations were also granted for 277 new homes in the “Ariel” settlement and for 110 new homes in the “Beit Anyeh” settlement. Most recently, on 27 September, 1,100 new homes were approved in the “Gilo” settlement.

Among other activities, he said Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council on 25 August and 27 September. He noted that during the reporting period, Palestine had been recognized as a State by El Salvador, Honduras, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Belize.

In other developments, he drew attention to the controversy created over the report of the Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 flotilla incident. The report, which was submitted to the Secretary-General on 2 September, was criticized by a group of five independent United Nations human rights experts, among many others, in particular, for the conclusion that Israel’s naval blockade of the Gaza Strip was legal.

Introducing the Palestinian Rights Committee’s draft report to the General Assembly and outlining it chapter by chapter, Rapporteur Saviour F. Borg said Israeli settlement activities were “inimical” to the peace process and contravened international law, Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and the Road Map. In the Committee’s view, further progress required the dismantlement of the Israeli occupation and its associated settlements, which had intensified. The Committee recommended that international meetings in 2012 focus on widening support for Palestine’s right to self-determination, strengthening support for permanent status negotiations and ending all illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

He said the Committee would convene a meeting on the role of youth to resolve the question of Palestine, and would pay particular attention to the empowerment of women and their organizations to help end incitement on both sides. The Committee also strongly recommended continuation and enhancement of the annual training for Palestinian Authority staff by the Division for Palestinian Rights, and requested that continued attention be given to development of the “Question of Palestine” website and use of new technology and social media. Finally, the Committee requested continuation of the Department of Public Information’s special programme on the question of Palestine, which made an important contribution.

Before the Committee adopted the draft report, to be presented to the General Assembly in November, the representatives of South Africa and Cuba proposed that its recommendations should positively support Palestine’s recent request for United Nations membership. Cuba’s representative proposed that the report’s recommendations express the Committee’s desire for the Security Council to favourably consider that request. Following Mr. Mansour’s expression of support for those proposals, the Rapporteur invited South Africa and Cuba to submit a written formulation of those additional recommendations to the Bureau for examination and possible inclusion in the draft report.

In other business, the Chair said the annual training programme for Palestinian Authority staff had started on 12 September, welcoming Jumana El-Ghoul and Bassam Qawasmeh, First Secretaries in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. He also recalled that the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be observed on 29 November, at which time the Assembly would consider the item on the question of Palestine.

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