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COMING YEAR SHOULD FINALLY SEE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, DESPITE IMPASSE

SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Conflict Deemed 'Great Unfinished Business of Twentieth Century'; Leaders On Both Sides Challenged to Show Statesmanship, Political Courage to Attain Peace

Despite a mood of pessimism among Palestinians and Israelis alike, the coming year should be the one in which a just and lasting peace would finally be achieved in the Middle East, in line with United Nations resolutions, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Mgiro said today, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Delivering a message of the Secretary-General at a special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Ms. Mgiro noted that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had pledged to seek a framework agreement on permanent status by September 2011. The Palestinian Authority was on track to complete its two-year agenda of readiness for statehood by August 2011, she reported.

The diplomatic Quartet, at its meeting in September 2010, had stated that an agreement could be reached in the timeframe set out by the leaders, she recalled. However, few Palestinians were optimistic that anything decisive would be achieved. Soon after direct talks on final status had begun in September, the talks were undermined by the expiry of Israel's commendable settlement moratorium.

Similarly, few Israelis seemed hopeful that peace could be achieved soon, she said, asking all Israelis to "look with fresh eyes at the indisputable emergence of a reliable security partner on the ground, and the continued commitment of President Abbas to Israel's right to live in peace and security, and to his rejection of violence and terrorism".

Indeed, she challenged the two leaders, Mr. Abbas and Mr. Netanyahu, to "show statesmanship and political courage in reaching a historic peace", and she added that the international community must be ready to assume its own responsibilities for peace. She pledged, on Mr. Ban's behalf, to "do everything in my power" to support current efforts.

The Committee also heard from Joseph Deiss, the President of the General Assembly, who recalled that 29 November was the anniversary of General Assembly resolution 181, which partitioned the Mandate of Palestine into two States — one Jewish, the other Arab. Sadly, that resolution had not led to a just and lasting solution, he said. Hope and a sense of positive direction had to be restored to the people of the region, efforts for negotiations stepped up, violence and acts of terror halted, United Nations resolutions respected, and actions that aggravated the situation stopped. "Now is the time for peace," he urged.

"The question of Palestine weighs heavily on our collective consciousness as the great unfinished business of the twentieth century," said Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee. Palestinians and Israelis alike were still paying the price for that failure, he added. The United Nations had a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the matter was fully resolved, and Member States, individually and collectively, had to demonstrate active solidarity and take immediate action to improve the lives of Palestinians, starting with the lifting of the blockade on Gaza.

Among the other speakers today was Riyad Mansour, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, who read a message from Mr. Abbas. He called for a decisive, final end to the "vicious Israeli colonial settlement campaign" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. That

campaign was a "time bomb" capable of destroying all progress on the road to peace.

In remarks at the end of the meeting, Mr. Mansour expressed gratitude and appreciation for the expressions of solidarity that had been heard today. It was hoped that next year, "or very soon," the United Nations would be celebrating the independence of Palestine and its full membership in the United Nations system. Immediately after the meeting, Committee members were given a performance of "The Gaza Monologue", a piece by the Asthar Theatre Group of Ramallah depicting the situation there.

Also speaking today were Mark Lyall Grant of the United Kingdom, as Security Council President; and Palitha Kohona (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

Also making statements were the representatives of Egypt (reading a message from the President of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement of Countries); Tajikistan (reading a message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan and Chairman of the thirty-seventh session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers) and Mali (on behalf of the African Group).

The Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States read a message from the Secretary General of the League.

In addition, a member of the National Steering Committee, US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, spoke on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

Background

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People met today to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Statements

ABDOU SALAM DIALLO (Senegal), Committee Chairman, said that 63 years ago, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 181 (II), which changed the course of history of the Middle East and beyond. It embodied a solemn commitment by the international community to the establishment of two States in mandated Palestine. Today, that promise was only half fulfilled. Though a Jewish State, Israel came into being in 1948, Palestine, the Arab State, remained a vision yet to be realized.

"The question of Palestine weighs heavily on our collective consciousness as the great unfinished business of the twentieth century," he said. The Palestinians and the Israelis continued to pay the price for that failure.

For decades, half of the Palestinians had been deprived of freedom, living under occupation on their own land, he said. The other half had been living as refugees, with all of the hardships that that status brought. The international community had a duty to restore the political and diplomatic means to give back to the Palestinians a hope of, at last, recovering a measure of dignity fully equal to that of all the peoples in the region.

The Committee had wholeheartedly welcomed the peace process launched in 1991 as a guarantee of establishing a viable Palestinian State, while simultaneously providing Israel with recognition, peace and security, in line with the recommendations of the Quartet's Road Map, he said. It had called on the parties to refrain from destabilizing unilateral actions on the ground, including settlements building and expansion. But it appeared that Israel found itself unable to assume that undertaking, recognized by the entire international community as a minimum confidence-building measure. It was not difficult, therefore, to understand the Palestinian Authority's frustration and reluctance to negotiate under such circumstances.

He recalled that the General Assembly had reaffirmed that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the matter was fully resolved in satisfactory way, in accordance with international legitimacy. The Assembly must continue to call attention to the guidelines required for the parties to commit themselves in good faith to that goal. Member States, individually and collectively, must demonstrate their active solidarity and take immediate action to improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

The urgent first step was to lift the blockade that had unfairly weighed on the civilian population of Gaza for over three years, he said. The second step was to require all the appropriate international bodies to prevent impunity, particularly during military operations in the Territory, and to ensure that the status of East Jerusalem and the holy sites was respected. Israel must also be called upon to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law. The international community must demonstrate solidarity with Palestine by strongly backing the Fayyad Plan. It must be implemented to make the Palestinian State viable, and everything must be done to ensure that the plan was funded.

JOSEPH DEISS, President of the General Assembly, said the date of 29 November had been chosen because of its significance to the Palestinian people, for it was on that day in 1947 that the General Assembly had adopted resolution 181, which partitioned the mandate for Palestine into two States, one Jewish and one Arab. Sadly, that resolution had not translated into a just and lasting solution. This day was still observed in order to show an enduring commitment to and solidarity with the people of the region, and to reaffirm the permanent responsibility of the United Nations to remain seized of the question of Palestine until it was resolved in all its aspects.

Mr. Deiss paid tribute to the United Nations in general and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), as well as non-governmental organizations and civil society for their invaluable efforts on ground. Violence, human suffering and mistrust had dominated Palestinian-Israeli relations for far too long. How could the inability to resolve the situation be explained to future generations? Hope and a sense of positive direction had to be restored to the people of the region, and efforts for negotiations must be stepped up. Violence and acts of terror had to cease. United Nations resolutions should be respected, and actions that aggravated the situation had to stop. "Now is the time for peace."

Everything should be done to alleviate the daily suffering of the Palestinian people, who needed greater access and mobility, he said. The engagement of the international community should be intensified in order to help the parties end a conflict that had tormented the region and its people for far too long. No effort should be spared; that was in the interest of the parties, the region and international peace and security. The commitment to the Middle East peace process must be reaffirmed, and international assistance to the Palestinian people mobilized. They deserved a life of security and peace.

Deputy Secretary-General ASHA-ROSE MIGIRO, delivering a message on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said every year on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the international community reflected on the situation of the Palestinians and considered what more could be done for peace. Two timelines reached a critical point in 2011. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had pledged to seek a framework agreement on permanent status by September 2011, and the Palestinian Authority was on track to complete its two-year agenda of readiness for statehood by August.

She said that the Quartet, at its meeting in September 2010, had stated that an agreement could be reached in the timeframe set out by the leaders themselves, and that the Palestinian Authority, if it maintained its current performance in institution-building and the delivery of public services, was well-positioned for the

establishment of a State at any point in the near future.

But few Palestinians were optimistic that anything decisive would be achieved next year, or even at all, she said. Soon after direct talks on final status had begun in September, the talks were undermined by the expiry of Israel's commendable settlement moratorium. Construction of hundreds of new units throughout the West Bank had commenced, and new approvals for settlements in East Jerusalem had been given. "This development is a serious blow to the credibility of the political process. The obligation remains on Israel to meet its responsibilities under international law and the Road Map to freeze settlement activity," she said.

At the same time, few Israelis seemed hopeful that peace could be achieved soon, she said, noting Israel's security concerns. "But I ask all Israelis to look with fresh eyes at the indisputable emergence of a reliable security partner on the ground, and the continued commitment of President Abbas to Israel's right to live in peace and security, and to his rejection of violence and terrorism," she said.

She also reminded the international community of the promise of the Arab Peace Initiative that a two-State solution and comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace would be followed by the establishment of normal relations between Israel and all Arab States. She commended steps in the past year to improve conditions on the ground. However, much more was needed. The Palestinian Authority must continue to roll out the institutions of statehood, combat terrorist attacks and curb incitement. It was also both Israel's interest and duty to begin rolling back the occupation, particularly with respect to movement, access and security actions.

She expressed great concern about conditions in Gaza, and appreciation for the modification of Israel's policy and the approval of a substantial number of United Nations projects. But that was only a first step. Full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) should follow. Israel needed to enable broader civilian reconstruction, free movement of persons and the export of goods, and to facilitate the swift implementation of projects. Rocket fire from Gaza also must stop. A prisoner exchange, the extension of de facto calm and progress on Palestinian reconciliation were also key steps.

An overwhelming international consensus existed on the need to end the occupation that began in 1967, address the fundamental security concerns of both parties, find a solution to the refugee issue and see Jerusalem emerge from negotiation as the capital of two States, she said. "I challenge the two leaders to show statesmanship and political courage in reaching a historic peace," she said. The international community, for its part, must be ready to assume its own responsibilities for peace.

"Let the year ahead be the one in which we realize, finally, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative," she said, pledging to "do everything in my power to support these efforts".

MARK LYALL GRANT ([United Kingdom](#)), delivering an address as Security Council President, recalled that in June 2009, the Quartet had affirmed its determination to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map, and the agreements previously reached between the parties. The Security Council was fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the vision of two States living side by side with mutually agreed borders.

Throughout the past year, he noted, regular briefings had been given to the Security Council on the situation. It had been underscored by Council members that the only viable solution was an agreement negotiated between the parties. Only a two-State solution could bring peace to the region. The parties had been ordered by the Council to avoid unilateral and provocative action; unilateral action such as settlement activities could not prejudice the outcome and could not be recognized by the international community. Transformative change was required on the ground.

He said the situation in Gaza was viewed with concern by Council members, who, in an agreed statement in June after the tragic flotilla incident, had deemed that the situation in Gaza was unsustainable. The importance of full implementation of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) was re-emphasized in that statement. The situation in Gaza was unsustainable and, as the Quartet had reaffirmed in September 2010, it was not in the interest of Palestinians or Israelis. The efforts of humanitarian organizations and agencies on the ground, particularly UNRWA and its staff, were lauded by all Council members. The international community was encouraged to support its work. The Security Council remained seized of the situation, and it would reconsider it on a regular basis. It was committed to the ultimate goal of the realization of the Palestinian people's desire for their own democratic State.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of [Palestine](#) to the United Nations, reading a message by Mr. Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, said that although the numerous United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine had yet to be implemented due to Israel's refusal and intransigence, they still constituted the foundation for protecting the rights of the Palestinian people and the basis for achieving justice, which was a prerequisite to peace. Underpinning progress towards a peaceful settlement of the long conflict was the principle of partnership and agreement on the legal terms of reference, as well as commitment to agreements reached. That partnership must embrace the legitimate concerns of each party and lay the foundation for a new, different future for the Palestinians and Israelis.

"The Palestinian partner will continue to be a real partner, not to improve the ugly face of the occupation, but to bring an end to that occupation," he said. "Negotiations must be fair and lead to a clear and binding agreement, and this does not mean that the powerful party, Israel, should be permitted to consistently impose its will on us." The deterioration in the peace process must be addressed, the appropriate atmosphere created, and bridges of confidence built. That required bringing a decisive, final end to the vicious Israeli colonial settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. That campaign was a time bomb capable of destroying all progress on the road to peace.

Confiscation of land, the expulsion of Palestinian citizens from their homes and construction of the annexation apartheid wall also must be ceased, he said. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails must be released. The unjust, inhumane siege imposed on the Palestinians in Gaza must be lifted. The illegal transfer of Israeli citizens into the Occupied Palestinian Territory must be halted, he said, stressing that there could be no coexistence between settlement activity and peace. Settlements were a flagrant, aggressive manifestation of the occupation and the mentality of expansion.

A real, lasting and comprehensive peace could not be achieved if it was not based on resolutions of international legitimacy, he said. The path of the political process must be corrected, erosion of the negotiations must be stopped, and the commitment to a just, lasting peace process must be reaffirmed. The demands of justice and international law required that. Peace could not be achieved according to the so-called economic peace or practical considerations based on what could be "accepted" by the occupying Power, "pre-acceptance" of which had undermined the peace process and prospects for regional security and stability.

He strongly rejected all unilateral action by Israel and demanded its immediate cessation because it affected the final status issues and was a clear attempt to single-handedly determine the map of the final solution. "We must draw lessons from the results of the past failures on international efforts to compel Israel to end its settlement policies and practices of aggression, which have caused so much damage to and undermined the credibility of the peace process with our people," he said.

The occupation and settlement activity was the core of the conflict, and it was time for the world to address them, he said, expressing hope that Palestine would be a new, active and recognized member of the United Nations in the next year. The Palestinians needed the international community's continued efforts and those of the co-sponsors of the peace process.

PALITHA T.B. KOHONA (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, said this day provided a critical reminder to the international community of the urgent need to finally resolve the Palestinian question in a just and equitable manner. The situation for the occupied Palestinian people remained dire. Despite efforts to revive peace talks this year, facts on the ground had revealed that prospects for the achievement of the right to self-determination were as distant and elusive as ever. Severely undermining prospects for attaining statehood were the ongoing confiscation of land, settlement and housing expansion, and the construction of the wall.

He said that the whole spectrum of rights was being infringed upon by policies and practices emanating from the current occupation regime. As a result, a significant proportion of the occupied population lived in poverty, and many were totally dependent on humanitarian aid. Poverty was particularly high in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the Israeli-imposed blockade, and in Area C of the West Bank, due to restrictive access and discriminatory planning. Loss of life and injuries in conflict-related violence was a matter of deep concern; more than 6,200 Palestinians were still detained and tortured, and ill-treatment had been alleged.

The Special Committee had presented its forty-second report earlier this month, concluding that an unacceptable culture of impunity was prevailing, leading to the repetition of violations, as highlighted every year by the Special Committee and others, he said. Intensified diplomatic efforts were needed, leading to the adoption of measures that would require Israel to comply with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian question and with international humanitarian and human rights laws. Palestinians and Israelis could enjoy security and peace as neighbours through a political solution, with human rights at its heart.

MAGED ABDELAZIZ (Egypt), reading a message from Hosni Mubarak, President of Egypt, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said the Palestinian people's suffering continued. Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian Territory and violations of the Palestinian people's rights included the unlawful embargo of Gaza; Israel's continued failure to meet its commitment as an occupying Power; its continued policy of settlement and alteration of the situation on the ground; the expropriation of Palestinian land and property and the attempt to change the features of Al-Quds al-Sharif; assaults on the sanctity of holy places and those who frequented them; and the continued building of the separation wall. They also included other practices in violation of international law and international humanitarian law, and in flagrant violation of human rights, such as the recent decision on an oath of allegiance to the Jewish character of the State, which clearly violated the rights of Palestinian Israeli Arabs and was an obvious attempt to expel them from Israeli territory.

He lauded the Committee's work to bring about a Palestinian State and support the Palestinian people's recovery of their inalienable legitimate rights, with a view to a just settlement of the Palestinian question as inseparable to the overall solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and a requirement for stability in the Middle East. The defining features of the definitive solution were known to all. What was needed now was a genuine will for peace on Israel's part, he said, noting that everyone had understood the earnestness of the Palestinian Authority and its commitment to peace, while Israel's actions bespoke of its insistence on emptying the political process of its contents.

He urged the international community to assume its responsibilities and pool the efforts of all parties to ensure the resumption of negotiations, based on clear terms of reference, within a definite time frame, and on necessary sound bases, notably the full and unconditional cessation of settlement activity and all Israeli policies thwarting peace.

SIRODJDIN M. ASLOV (Tajikistan) read a message from Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan and Chairman of the thirty-seventh session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, in which Mr. Zarifi recalled the General Assembly declaration of 29 November 1947. Pursuant to that resolution, only one State had been established; the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people for their own State were still unrealized. A few months ago, a number of resolutions had been adopted by Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference regarding the Palestinian Territory, and particularly Gaza. There was a lack of food, medicine and building materials in Gaza, where people expected the international community to take steps to end the suffering.

Regarding the building of settlements and the status of East Jerusalem, he said there was consensus among an absolute majority of international public opinion. The occupation of East Jerusalem was illegal under international law and counter to Israeli obligations under the Road Map. Tensions were intensified by settlements, which created insurmountable obstacles on the road to peace. Any changes to the status of the city had no legitimacy under international law; its status had been set out in General Assembly resolutions, which Israel was obliged to respect. The only possible solution was a two-State solution that would bring peace and security and provide the impetus for economic development.

World opinion was calling upon the international community to assume its responsibility to the Palestinian people and make serious efforts towards implementation of international agreements, he said. The Palestinian people had support in their just struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian Territory and the exercise of their inalienable rights, including the right to return to their homes.

OUMAR DAOU (Mali), reading a message on behalf of the African Group, reaffirmed solidarity with the Palestinian people. The situation in the Middle East was a major international concern. He pointed to Israel's blockade on Gaza and the millions of Palestinian refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and neighbouring countries, saying their situation was a cause for concern. He paid tribute to the work of UNRWA. A negotiated solution could not be postponed; it was time to make the two-State solution a reality and to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly concerning ending the blockade against Gaza and resuming peace negotiations. Israel must commit to dismantling its settlements, removing the blockade against Gaza and creating favourable conditions to restarting negotiations. He reaffirmed the African Group's firm support for the efforts of the Quartet, the Non-Aligned Movement and other organizations. It was now time for the Palestinians to recover their rights and have an independent State. The African Group would spare no effort to contribute to a just and lasting solution.

YAHYA MAHMASSANI, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States, reading a message from Amre Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, said a dangerous situation currently threatened the peace process and the creation of two States, thus preventing the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. Through a policy of colonization and settlement, the effort to make Israel a Jewish State created obstacles to resuming serious negotiations to address all aspects of final status, on the basis of international legitimacy. Unilateral measures taken by Israel were null and void. He called on the competent United Nations authorities to assume their responsibility and ensure implementation of United Nations resolutions. A just peace with Israel could only be realized by an Israeli withdrawal to 1967 borders.

The Arab League also called upon the international community to immediately take necessary measures to end inhumane and unjust conditions in the Arab sector, the message from Mr. Moussa said. Israel was responsible for freezing direct negotiations, which had been launched by United States President Barack Obama, and for persisting with illegal settlements. There must be a complete halt to all settlements in the Occupied Territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel had also violated human rights instruments. Decades of occupation destabilized the region and threatened international peace and security. Israel had rejected all initiatives that would have led to a settlement. President Obama's statement of 23 September to the General Assembly was welcomed by the Arab League, which stood ready to cooperate with the United States authorities. He called on the United States to continue its efforts to create a conducive situation, including a halt to settlements, so that the peace process could proceed.

JUDITH LEBLANC, member of the National Steering Committee, US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, speaking on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine, said civil society's opportunity and challenge today was to mobilize and shape global public opinion to help break the deadlock of more than 60 years of Israeli Occupation. In that regard, public opinion in the United States was decisive. The Israeli military action on the Gaza freedom flotilla had ignited a groundswell of global solidarity, indignation and debate, fuelling support for the global movement that called for a boycott, divestment and sanctions. But United States public opinion and official policy remained the biggest barrier to change.

She said that, according to recent United States public opinion polls, pluralities knew that the ongoing illegal Israeli settlements were wrong and should be

stopped, and they supported President Obama's efforts. But most United States citizens still did not understand the history of and issues surrounding the conflict or the United States' role in supporting the Israeli regime. They did not know that Israel ignored United Nations and international law because the United States Government had poured more than \$3 trillion into Israel's economy, given Israel \$3 billion annually in military aid and used more than 48 Security Council vetoes to protect Israel from international condemnation. The recent United States mid-term elections compounded the complexity for solidarity organizing. Two-thirds of registered Democrats opposed Israeli policies, while two-thirds of registered Republicans supported them at all costs.

The United States, under the Obama Administration, continued to interfere with the United Nations diplomatic role and implementation of resolutions, as well as the Goldstone Report, based on politically driven domestic pressures, she said. The most recent example was the United States' promise to turn over \$3 billion in stealth fighters to Israel and to veto any United Nations resolution that questioned Israel's legitimacy in exchange for Israel's pledge to extend a 10-month partial settlement moratorium for 90 more days. The powerful, moneyed pro-Israel lobby remained one of the strongest influences on United States' foreign policy, and it could only be challenged by internationally organized, sustained civil society pressure, particularly in the United States.

She pointed to examples of such activity. In California, member groups of the United States Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation successfully lobbied to place a referendum on the state ballot in the next elections that called on the state to divest teacher and state workers' retirement pension funds from companies that profited from the Israeli occupation. Nationally, churches and other civic groups were increasingly debating divestment from companies that did business with and sold weapons to Israel or that provided bulldozers for house demolitions. In the last few weeks, international pressure was making it difficult for the United States Government to send previously promised Caterpillar tractors.

Frustration over United Nations and United States failure continued to lead to more humanitarian efforts by United States citizens and others to break Israel's cruel, inhuman blockade on Gaza, she said. The boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns worldwide were having a real impact on Israel. But civil society alone would not end the occupation of Palestine. The United Nations must continue to challenge the unilateral role of the United States Government in the region. It must resist attempts to circumvent international law. The Road Map for reversing the damage of the Gaza blockade, removing the apartheid wall and ending the occupation as a whole must combine the United Nations moral authority, in collaboration with Governments and global civil society.

The Chair then acknowledged the receipt of messages from a number of Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations, saying they would be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights. The unwavering support of the international community for the establishment of peace in the Middle East and the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and international law, were demonstrated by those statements.

Mr. MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine, expressed gratitude and appreciation for the support that had been expressed. The cause of Palestine was a very important one. He noted that, immediately after the meeting, the Ashtar Theatre group from Ramallah, comprising actors from many countries, would be performing "The Gaza Monologues" to members of the Committee. It was hoped that next year, or very soon, the independence of Palestine and its full membership in the United Nations system would be celebrated.

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