



## General Assembly

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### UNITED NATIONS ASIAN AND PACIFIC MEETING ON QUESTION OF PALESTINE

#### EXPRESSES STRONG SUPPORT FOR TWO-STATE SOLUTION

#### New Facts on Ground Give Cause for Concern in Concluding Statement

(Received from a UN Information Officer.)

JAKARTA, Indonesia, 9 June – The United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine came to a close today with a statement in strong support of the two-State solution: Israel and Palestinian, living side by side in peace and security.

The two-day Meeting was organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People with the aim of encouraging broad international action, including by Asian and Pacific States and societies, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and for a negotiated solution to the conflict based on a two-State solution. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israelis and Palestinians; representatives of United Nations Member States and observer delegations; parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations; and representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the media.

According to the "Concluding statement of the Organizers", participants stressed that the creation of two States, could only be based on international law, Security Council and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. A negotiated solution to the question of Jerusalem, based on international law, was essential not only for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also for lasting peace in the region as a whole.

Participants deplored the lack of pronounced support by the current Government of Israel for a two-State solution and denounced the acceleration of settlement construction, particularly in and around Jerusalem. Grave concern was voiced about the further deterioration of the situation in Gaza and the continued siege of the enclave. Participants were heartened by the recent remarks of United States President Barack Obama regarding the need for Israel to cease settlement activity.

In his closing statement, Rezdan Ishar Jenie, Director-General for Multilateral Affairs in Indonesia's Department of Foreign Affairs, noted that, amid accounts of the terrible conditions under which the Palestinian people were living, voices of hope could be heard. In order to turn that hope into reality, the great challenges ahead must be recognized and practical steps must be taken by all sides. The peace process must be energized by a sense of urgency.

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine at the United Nations in New York, stressed that the existing international consensus around the two-State solution and the need for Israel to freeze all settlement activities and dismantle outposts must be transformed into political will to make Israel, the occupying Power, change its behaviour so that negotiations on all final-status issues could begin in good faith.

In his closing remarks, Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the convening body, stressed that the only way to restore long-lost justice for the Palestinian people lay in a two-State solution.

Before the Meeting's closing session, a panel of experts described support by Asian and Pacific countries for a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### Presentation of Experts

AKIFUM IKEDA, Professor, Toyo Eiwa University, Yokohama, said that, ever since the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Agreements, the Government of Japan had supported the peace process and was now the third largest donor to the Palestinians, to whom it had extended almost \$1 billion in assistance. As a country that imported nearly 90 per cent of its oil from the Middle East, stability in that region was of the utmost importance to Japan.

He said that his country, while not a direct party to the conflict and lacking historical or religious ties to the region, had no illusions about its ability to make peace. However, it had a desire to share the benefits of a free and open society. It was not a sense of giving, but a sense of sharing that made Japan reach out to the Palestinians. Japan believed in a two-State solution, which was essential for regional and global peace. Encouraged by President Obama's assurance of strong backing for a Palestinian State, Japan would try to cooperate with the United States to make their policies successful.

NIGEL PARSONS, Lecturer, Politics Programme, Massey University, New Zealand, said his country's position had been fairly consistent since the General Assembly had voted on the partition in 1947. New Zealand had voted in favour of that partition and still supported a two-State solution. However, there had lately been a shift in the tone of policy, culminating in the reopening of the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand. The current Foreign Ministry seemed reluctant to condemn Israeli actions. New Zealand's official position could be characterized by the key words "even-handed and constructive".

He said his country supported Israel's right to exist and the Palestinian right to self-determination and a viable and territorially contiguous State. However, New Zealand did not recognize Israel's annexation of Jerusalem in 1980, nor did it recognize that city as the capital of Israel, which had no mandate to build permanent settlements in occupied territory. The motive for that position could be explained in terms of rational calculation of self-interest. New Zealand stood to benefit from a stable, rule-based world order. It also imported all its oil.

New Zealand's policies towards Israel and Palestine were broadly consistent with the secular nationalist agenda of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he said. The country had a solid track record of contributing to United Nations operations in the region and, beyond peacekeeping, it provided financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). New Zealand's warming towards Israel need not be at the expense of the Palestinians. If it did appear that Israel's gain was Palestine's loss, New Zealand had resources upon which Palestine could draw.

LI GUOFU, Researcher, China Institute of International Studies, Beijing, said the Palestinian issue remained at the centre of regional tensions in the Middle East. It had not only brought about tremendous human tragedies but had also affected world peace and stability. The Palestinians and Israelis had both denied, through violent confrontations, each other's legitimate rights as a nation. Because cycles of violence did not bring solutions, the only way to settle the issue was through a peaceful dialogue.

He said the concept of a two-State solution had been unanimously accepted by the international community, as well as a majority of Israelis. The key to such a solution was in the hands of Palestinians and Israelis. Due to the huge disparity between the two sides, however, it would be impossible for the two parties to reach a fair and sustainable settlement without active engagement by the international community.

Since the beginning of 2009, there had been some positive and negative developments, he said. Instead of political negotiations, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was talking about "economic peace", thereby trying to shift attention from the peace process. However, President Obama's 4 June speech had opened a window of opportunity for the peace process to achieve something tangible. If his intentions were sincere, it would be a new development that would change the rules of the game.

Pointing out that his country had been among the first to establish diplomatic relations with the PLO, he said that since then, it had always supported the Palestinians. China also believed in the Israel's right of survival, but that right should not be at the expense of Palestinians' right to fulfil their national aspirations.

RUHANAS HARUN, Head of Strategic Studies and International Relations, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, said that the way in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was perceived in the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) depended on where one lived. Comprising 10 countries with a total population of 600 million people, half of which were Muslim, three of those countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei – did not have diplomatic relations with Israel. There were also pockets of Muslims in Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore.

Solidarity with the Palestinian cause came from a Muslim mentality, she said. The perception of Muslims, shaped by the Muslim media, was that Muslims were suppressed by Israel. The perception of other groups was shaped by Western media. Malaysian Muslim groups had collected a lot of money in support of Palestinians in Gaza, while non-Muslims had expressed neutrality. There was a need to change the perception of the non-Muslims in ASEAN countries and to impress upon them that the Palestinian conflict was about the struggle for independence.

While Governments in South-East Asia supported the Palestinian cause in international forums, ASEAN as a group had not made any official pronouncements on the matter, she said. One reason was that most ASEAN countries had diplomatic relations with Israel and it was, therefore, not possible for the group to take a position. On the other hand, people at the grass-roots level without a deep understanding of the problem knew only that there was a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, or Muslims and Jews. Non-governmental organizations would be in a position to explain the problem at the grassroots level.

SAMUEL LEE, Director General, Corporation Ecopeace Asia, Seoul, said the Republic of Korea was in the peculiar position whereby its people were usually not very concerned about Palestine and focused more on their own problems. Moreover, the country had been under very strong influence by the United States. Since during the cold war, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had supported the Palestinians while the Republic of Korea had strengthened its ties with Israel. Because the majority in the south were Christian, they identified more with the country of Abraham and Jesus.

Civil society in the Republic of Korea should be more concerned with a settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, which had much in common with the Korean peninsula. Hopefully the Palestinian Rights Committee could organize a similar meeting in the Republic of Korea so that Korean civil society could be sensitized and mobilized. A most urgent imperative for the peace process was, therefore, peace education to change the prejudices of both sides and promote the idea of reconciliation at the cost of chauvinistic, self-interest and privilege.

#### Closing Remarks

The Meeting took note of the "Concluding Statement of the Organizers", read out by HAMIDON ALI, Rapporteur of the Meeting and Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations.

REZLAN ISHAR JENIE, Director-General for Multilateral Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, expressed his country's gratitude to the Committee for convening the Meeting and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his support for a two-State solution. Indonesia's hosting of the Meeting was a reflection of the country's long-standing support for the Palestinian cause and for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

Noting that participants had paid much attention to the issue of settlements and the status of East Jerusalem, he said that amid accounts of the terrible conditions under which the Palestinian people were living, voices of hope could still be heard. President Obama promoted peace and harmony in the Middle East, and in order to turn that hope into reality, the great challenges ahead must be recognized and practical steps taken by all sides. The peace process must be energized by a sense of urgency and the parties must be encouraged to act.

RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer of Palestine at the United Nations in New York, said the panellists had introduced very rich ideas, noting that at the current critical moment, the Palestinians needed all the help they could get from all Governments, experts and civil society. They had suffered far too long and deserved a State next to Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital. They also deserved a just solution to the refugee question.

He stressed that the Palestinian people must put their own house in order and forge unity. An international consensus around a two-State solution and the need for Israel to freeze all settlement activities and dismantle outposts must be transformed into practical steps and political will to make Israel, the occupying Power, change its behaviour and so that negotiations on all final-status issues could resume in good faith. Hopefully a way could be paved towards an agreement on a Palestinian State within a year.

Committee Chairman PAUL BADJI ( Senegal), in his closing remarks, expressed appreciation to all participants for their "fruitful and enlightened" contributions. The Committee thanked the Government of Indonesia, a country that was among the most active members of the Committee also one of the most supportive of the Palestinian people.

He said the past two days had shown that, despite significant developments in the region, certain fundamental and inalterable rights and principles could not be changed even by new "facts on the ground". Given the new reality in Israel, the international community must redouble its efforts to reaffirm the tenets of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), which, if implemented, would give rise to the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

The peace process was currently at a stand still, he said, pointing out that one of the parties to the conflict had yet even to mention the two-State solution and talked instead about "economic peace". There were serious obstacles to overcome before the parties could be brought to the negotiating table. President Obama had provided a glimmer of hope by stating that arriving at a two-State solution would be one of his Administration's policy goals, and by speaking out firmly against Israeli settlements. Hopefully his words would be heeded and the Israeli-Palestinian impasse would end.

Reiterating the Committee's position that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory was the root cause of the conflict, he said the Committee would continue to raise awareness of all aspects of the relevant issues until the occupation was brought to an end and the conflict resolved.

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