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STATEMENT BY BUREAU OF COMMITTEE ON PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

CONCERNING REMOVAL OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

On 30 August 2005, the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued the following statement:

"Together with the rest of the international community, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been watching closely the removal of Israeli settlements from the occupied Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank. The Bureau of the Committee views this development as a promising step that could revive negotiations within the framework of the Road Map and move forward the stalled peace process. The Bureau of the Committee welcomes the swift and determined implementation of the removal of settlers by the Israeli side. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, has fully demonstrated its ability to control the security situation throughout this critical period.

"Although the decision of the Israeli Government to remove settlements from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank was a unilateral one, it resulted in a resumption of direct security coordination between the parties. This created a favourable opportunity, which has to be built upon and widened by the two sides in order to lay the groundwork for future cooperation in security and other areas.

"The Bureau of the Committee emphasizes that the Gaza pull-out should be complete and irreversible, allowing the Palestinian Authority to exercise control over its borders, crossing points, sea and airspace. Also indispensable are guarantees for an unhindered flow of people and goods into and out of Gaza. The construction and operation of a seaport and an airport, as well as a permanent geographical link to the West Bank are absolutely vital for the Palestinian economy.

"The international community has voiced its readiness to support all efforts of the Palestinian Authority aimed at revitalizing the economy of the Gaza Strip. The Bureau of the Committee commends the donor community for the first important steps taken in support of the economic rehabilitation and development of the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal. We also urge the donor community to live up to its commitments and provide the necessary assistance in an expeditious and efficient manner.

"The Bureau of the Committee expresses the hope that the positive momentum gained as a result of the removal of settlements from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank will be followed by similar steps in the rest of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and breathe new life into the political process, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights."

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