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12th plenary meeting

Thursday, 27 September 2012, 9 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Jeremić (Serbia)

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

**Address by His Excellency Mr. Bakir Izetbegović,
Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The stalemate in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also deeply troubling. The peace process is not moving forward, and the chain of violence has not been broken. A new impetus to negotiations is urgently needed, because there is no alternative to a negotiated solution. The Palestinians have every right — historical, moral and legal — to a State of their own, but Israel has every right to its security. The occupation of Palestinian territories must end, but so must the terror and violence. All attempts to create new realities on the ground in the hope that they will be accepted as a starting point for future negotiations must be rejected. The continuation of settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories continues to pose the most serious obstacle to peace. Israel should immediately end all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, because those activities are illegal under international law. Doing so is in Israel's own best interest if it truly desires peace with the Palestinians.

The state of affairs of 60 or 6,000 years ago is not the right point of reference. The right point of reference for a solution is the principle of the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign States — an independent Palestine and a secure Israel. That is the only realistic way to bring about a just resolution to the conflict and to ensure stability and progress in the Middle East. To achieve such a solution, a more sincere attempt at good-faith negotiations is needed, especially on the part of Israel. The road to peace does not include ignoring United Nations resolutions, squeezing the Palestinians onto bits and pieces of the land that once belonged to their fathers, and building settlements on those remaining bits of land.

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Mr. Kamau (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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**Address by Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the
Republic of Tunisia**

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

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Tunisia wishes to reiterate its support for the Palestinian people and their right to a just peace and the release of thousands of prisoners. We support the creation of a

Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital and with membership in this Organization.

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**Address by Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar,
President of the Republic of Guyana**

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

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Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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I also wish to underline Guyana's strong support for the peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are of the view that the resolution of that conflict, which has lasted for too long, is key to a lasting peace in the Middle East. Guyana recognizes the State of Palestine based on its 1967 borders and supports its aspirations to full membership in the United Nations. The Palestinian people deserve the same rights as people everywhere: to live in dignity, security, freedom and independence, at peace with all their neighbours and with the right to move freely in their own land.

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**Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the
Union of the Comoros**

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

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Just as important is the Palestinian cause. For decades now, it has awaited a fair and lasting solution, one found through our shared desire to establish together the solid foundations for a world of peace and prosperity. The Union of the Comoros reiterates its full support for the Palestinian people and associates itself with the formula of a Palestinian State as a full-fledged member of the community of nations, living side by side and in perfect security with the State of Israel.

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**Address by Ms. Portia Simpson Miller, Prime
Minister of Defence, Development, Information
and Sports of Jamaica**

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Development, Information and Sports of Jamaica.

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We continue to urge the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations as early as possible, based on the two-State solution and relevant United Nations resolutions. Those resolutions address Israel's right to exist within secure borders, as well as the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood.

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The President returned to the Chair.

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Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

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

The President: 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.

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Mr. Abbas (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to begin by extending my appreciation to the heads of all the delegations who in their statements to the Assembly stressed the urgency of progress towards the realization of a just peace in our region, one which would allow the Palestinian people to enjoy their inalienable national rights.

Developments over the past year have confirmed what we have persistently drawn attention to and warned of: the catastrophic danger of racist settlers moving into our country. During the past months, attacks by terrorist militias of Israeli settlers have become a daily reality, with at least 535 attacks since the beginning of the year.

We are facing relentless waves of attacks against our people, our mosques, our churches and monasteries, and our homes and schools. They are unleashing their venom against our trees, fields, crops and properties, and our people have become fixed targets for acts of killing and torture, with the complete collusion of the occupying forces and the Israeli Government.

The escalation of settler attacks should not surprise anyone, for it is the inherent byproduct of the continuation of the occupation and a Government policy that deliberately fosters the settlements and settlers and deems their satisfaction to be an absolute priority. And it is the inherent byproduct of the racist climate fuelled by a culture of incitement in Israeli curriculums and extremist declarations and fatwas, which are rife with hatred and are rooted in a series of discriminatory laws created and enacted over the years against the Palestinian people by the Israeli security apparatus and courts. Those entities provide excuse after excuse for the settlers' crimes and for their accelerated release should one of them happen to be arrested. Official and military commissions of inquiry fabricate justifications for soldiers who have committed what are clearly considered war crimes and have perpetrated acts of murder, torture and abuse of peaceful Palestinian civilians.

Over the past year, since the convening of the General Assembly's previous session, the occupying Power has persisted with its settlement campaign, focusing on Jerusalem and its environs. It is a campaign clearly and deliberately aimed at altering the city's historic character and the glorious image of the Holy City as etched in the minds of humankind. It is a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people of Jerusalem via the demolition of their homes and prevention of their reconstruction, the revocation of residency rights, the denial of basic services, especially with regard to the construction of schools, the closure of institutions and the impoverishment of Jerusalem's community via a siege behind walls and checkpoints. That chokes the City and prevents millions of Palestinians from freely accessing its mosques, churches, schools, hospitals and markets. The occupying Power has also continued its construction and expansion of settlements in different areas throughout the West Bank and has continued its suffocating blockade, as well as raids and attacks against our people in the Gaza Strip, who to this day suffer from the disastrous impact of the destructive war of aggression committed against them a few years ago.

Nearly 5,000 Palestinians remain captive as prisoners and detainees of conscience in Israel's jails. In that regard, we call upon the international community to compel the Government of Israel to respect the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and to investigate the conditions of detention of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and we stress the need for their release. They are soldiers in their people's struggle for freedom, independence and peace.

At the same time, the occupying Power continues to tighten the siege and impose severe restrictions on movement, preventing the Palestinian Authority from implementing vital infrastructure projects and providing services to its citizens, who are also being prevented from cultivating their land and deprived of water for irrigation. The occupying Power is also obstructing the establishment of agricultural, industrial, tourism and housing projects by the Palestinian private sector in vast areas of the occupied Palestinian territory, which are classified as areas subject to the absolute control of the occupation, areas that encompass approximately 60 per cent of the West Bank.

The occupying Power continues to deliberately demolish what the Palestinian Authority is building — projects funded by donor brethren and friends — and is destroying the Authority's building projects involving roads, simple homes for its citizens and agricultural facilities. In fact, over the past 12 months, the Israeli occupying forces demolished 510 Palestinian structures in those areas and displaced 770 Palestinians from their homes. Those measures have caused great damage to our economy and impeded our development programmes and private-sector activity.

They compound the socioeconomic difficulties of our people under occupation, a fact confirmed by international financial institutions. Israel's overall policy is ultimately leading to the weakening of the Palestinian Authority, undermining its ability to carry out its functions and projects and to implement its obligations. This threatens to undermine its very existence or cause its collapse.

All of that is taking place in the context of an Israeli political discourse that does not hesitate to brandish aggressive, extremist positions. In many aspects and in their practical application on the ground, they incite religious conflict. That is something we firmly reject, based on our principles and convictions and due to our understanding of what it means to fuel such fires in this sensitive area, which is full of explosive flashpoints, and how that can fuel the action of extremists from various quarters, especially those trying to use tolerant, monotheistic religions as an ideological justification for their terrorism.

For our part, as proof of our seriousness and our sincere intention to create an opening in this impasse, we conducted exploratory talks with the Israeli Government at the beginning of the year, at the initiative of the brotherly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We have also encouraged the expressed desires of several countries to contribute to efforts to break the cycle of deadlock and have ourselves undertaken initiatives to create favourable conditions for the resumption of negotiations. Unfortunately, however, the result of all those initiatives has been very negative.

There can be only one reading of the Israeli Government's actions and practices in our homeland and of the positions it has presented to us regarding the substance of a final status agreement to end the conflict and achieve peace: that the Israeli Government rejects the two-State solution.

The two-State solution — namely, the State of Palestine coexisting alongside the State of Israel — represents the spirit and essence of the historic compromise embodied in the Declaration of Principles, which was agreed to in Oslo and was signed, 19 years ago, by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel under the auspices of the United States of America and on the White House lawn. It is a compromise by which, for the sake of making peace, the Palestinian people accepted to establish their State on only 22 per cent of the territory of historic Palestine.

Recent years have actually witnessed a systematic acceleration and intensification of Israeli measures aimed at gutting the Oslo Accords of their meaning, while simultaneously building facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory that are making the implementation of the Accords extremely difficult, if not completely impossible.

The Israeli Government aims to continue its occupation of East Jerusalem, to de facto annex large areas of the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and to continue occupying a large portion of the territory under different designations. It refuses to engage in any serious discussion of the issue of the Palestinian refugees. It wants to continue its occupation of Palestinian aquifers and its control over the most fertile agricultural areas in our land, as well as over our air, skies, water, borders and our life in its entirety.

The final map and borders that can be drawn in accordance with Israel's official positions reveal to us small Palestinian enclaves surrounded by large Israeli settlement blocs and walls and checkpoints, and vast security zones and roads reserved for settlers. The enclaves would therefore remain subject to the full dominance of military and settler occupation, only packaged under new names, such as the unilateral plan for a so-called State with provisional borders. I repeat — a State with provisional borders. That is a project that we categorically reject from A to Z because it will not bring about peace. Israel refuses to end the occupation and refuses to allow the Palestinian people to attain their freedom and independence. It rejects the establishment of the State of Palestine. Israel is promising the Palestinian people a new catastrophe — a new Naqba — a new setback.

I speak on behalf of an angry people who feel that while they demand their right to freedom, adopt a culture of peace and adhere to the principles and rules of international law and resolutions of international legitimacy, rewards continue to be illogically bestowed upon Israel, whose Government pursues a policy of war, occupation and settler occupation. Israel continues to be permitted to enjoy impunity, and some continue to obstruct the adoption of a decisive position regarding its violations of international law and covenants. That represents a licence for the occupation to continue its policy of dispossession and ethnic cleansing and encourages it to entrench its system of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

Despite our genuine feelings of anger, we — in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people — will not allow our country to be divided in two. We are the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. I reaffirm without hesitation that we are as committed — equally and by the same measures — to peace and international legitimacy and its covenants and resolutions as we are to upholding our inalienable national rights and aspirations. And we reaffirm that we are committed to non-violence and reject terrorism in all its forms, particularly State terrorism.

Despite our disappointment, we continue to sincerely extend a hand to the Israeli people to make peace. We realize that ultimately the two peoples must live and coexist, each in their respective State, in the Holy Land. Furthermore, we realize that progress towards making peace can be achieved through negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. Despite all the complexities of the prevailing reality and all the frustrations that abound, we say before the international community that there is still a chance — maybe the last — to save the two-State solution and to salvage peace. However, this urgent task must be pursued via a new approach.

Whoever rushes to advise us to repeat an experience that has proven to be futile, such as negotiations with the Israeli Government without clear terms of reference, must understand that this will result in the reproduction of failure and again provide cover for consecrating the occupation and will deal the final blow to an already dying peace process. Whoever advises us to wait must realize that the hotbeds of tension and the festering situation in our country and our region have their own timing and cannot withstand further procrastination and delay, nor are they amenable to being relegated to the bottom of the global agenda.

The approach required for salvaging the chance for peace must, first and foremost, be predicated on the understanding that the racist settler occupation must be condemned, punished and boycotted so that it is completely halted and eliminated. That approach also requires a reaffirmation of, and adherence to, the terms of reference and the foundations of the solution to the conflict, which have been endorsed by all here. We do not need to belabour the core components of a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Rather, what is needed is the will to implement those components. Marathon negotiations are not required to define them, rather it is the genuine and sincere intention to reach peace that is needed. Those components are by no means a mysterious puzzle or intractable riddle; they are the clearest and best-known secrets in the world. They include, in brief, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, over the entire territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and the realization of a just, agreed solution to the Palestine refugee issue, in accordance with resolution 194 (III), as prescribed in the Arab Peace Initiative.

The fundamental components of the solution to the conflict exist in the documents and resolutions of the United Nations. Member States already have them. The components of the solution are also endorsed in resolutions of regional organizations, beginning with the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union. They can also be found in the statements of the European Union and the international Quartet. However, what is the use of all those terms of reference if Israel continues to refuse, and is encouraged by others to continue to oppose the terms of reference?

The international community, embodied in the United Nations, is required now more than ever to uphold its responsibilities. The Security Council is called upon to urgently adopt a resolution comprising the pillars and foundations for a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that would serve as a binding term of reference and guide for all if the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, is to survive and if peace is to prevail in the land of peace — the birthplace of Jesus, peace be upon him, the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the final resting place of Abraham, peace be upon him — Palestine, the land of the three monotheistic religions.

All things considered, the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine is a sacred right of the Palestinian people and an entitlement that must be realized, for it has been overdue for too many decades. It is not a grant to be bestowed upon us by anyone. It is a right, and the Palestinian people are entitled to that right.

At the same time, the Palestinian Authority has affirmed, through the implementation of its State institution-building programmes, the ability to create an advanced model for an effective, modern State through the development of the performance of its institutions and public finance management and through the adoption of standards for transparency, strict accountability and rules of good governance. Those achievements have been deemed by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to constitute an impressive undertaking and success story. Those achievements were again commended in the latest report just a few days ago, which confirmed the Palestinian Authority's total readiness for the transition to an independent State while at the same time stressing that the Israeli occupation remained the only obstacle to the realization of the State of Palestine.

During the previous session of the General Assembly, we submitted our application for consideration by the Security Council to allow the State of Palestine to assume its rightful place among the community of nations as a full Member of the United Nations. A major and hostile uproar was raised by some against that political, diplomatic, peaceful step par excellence aimed at saving the peace process by asserting its principles and foundation. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the countries of the world supported, and continues to support, our application, our endeavour was aborted. I do not see even a single reason for opposing that request.

Yet when the countries of the world had the opportunity to declare their stance without any restrictions or veto during the previous autumn, they voted, despite enormous pressure, in strong support of the acceptance of Palestine as a member State of UNESCO. A year has passed, and Palestine, the homeland of Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said, is playing its role in UNESCO with a high level of responsibility and professionalism. Palestine is committed to international conventions and is cooperating with all member States in order to advance the objectives of the organization and providing a model of what its positive, constructive contribution in international organizations would be. In order to enhance the chances for peace, we will continue our efforts to obtain full membership for Palestine at the United Nations. For the same reason, we have begun intensive consultations with various regional organizations and Member States aimed at the General Assembly's adoption during this session of a draft resolution considering the State of Palestine as a non-member State of the United Nations. We are confident that the vast majority of the countries of the world support our efforts to bolster the chances for a just peace. In our efforts we do not seek to delegitimize an existing State, that is, Israel; but rather to establish the State that must be realized, that is, Palestine. We are not trying to delegitimize them; they are trying to delegitimize us.

More than 64 years have passed since Al-Nakba and a large number of those who were its immediate victims and witnessed its horrors have died. They died with memories, preserved in their minds and hearts, of their beautiful world that was devastated, their warm homes that were demolished and their peaceful villages that were erased from existence, and of the renaissance that was undermined, and their loved ones, dear men, women and children, who were killed in wars, massacres, attacks, raids and incursions, and of their beautiful country that was a beacon of coexistence, tolerance, progress and a crossroads of civilization.

They died displaced and in refugee camps to which they were expelled following their uprooting from their homeland, as they awaited the moment in which they would resume their suspended lives, complete their interrupted journey and repair their shattered dreams. They died while they clung to their legitimate human right to justice, freedom and redress for the historically unprecedented injustice inflicted upon them. Has the time not come to undo that injustice?

At present, 77 per cent of the Palestinian people are under the age of 35. Although they did not experience the horrors of Al-Nakba, they know very well all its horrendous details from the accounts of their parents and grandparents who endured it. They continue to suffer from its ongoing effects today and every day as a result of the practices of the occupation and of the settlers on a land that is diminishing in size. The horizon before them is closed to their simple, ordinary dreams. They see their homeland and their present and future vulnerable to continued usurpation and they say firmly: we shall not allow a new Al-Nakba to happen. I say to

the Assembly that the brave Palestinian people will not allow themselves to be the victims of a new Al-Nakba. We will not allow that. We will stay on our land. My people will continue their epic steadfastness and eternal survival journey in their beloved land, every inch of which carries evidence and landmarks affirming their roots and unique connection to the land throughout ancient history. There is no homeland for us except Palestine and there is no land for us but Palestine. We shall not accept an alternative homeland, nor an alternative land. Palestine is our homeland and shall remain our homeland.

Our people will continue to build the institutions of their State and strive to achieve national reconciliation to restore the unity of our nation, people and institutions via resorting to the ballot box, which will confirm our people's pluralistic democratic choice. Our people are also determined to continue peaceful popular resistance, consistent with international humanitarian law, against the occupation, against the settlements and for the sake of freedom, independence and peace.

Let us prevent the occurrence of a new Al-Nakba in the Holy Land. Let us support the realization of a free, independent State of Palestine now. Let peace be victorious before it is too late.

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Mr. Prosor (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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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.

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In the past year, I lost both my father and my father-in-law. In the same hospital wards where they were treated, Israeli doctors were treating Palestinian Arabs. In fact, every year, thousands of Arabs from the Palestinian territories and Arabs from throughout the Middle East come to Israel to be treated in Israeli hospitals by Israeli doctors. I know that that is not going to be spoken by speakers at this podium, but it is the truth. It is important that the world be aware of that truth. It is because Israel cherishes life that Israel cherishes peace and seeks peace. We seek to preserve our historic ties and our historic peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. We seek to forge a durable peace with the Palestinians.

President Abbas just spoke here. I say to him and I say to the Assembly: we will not solve our conflict with libellous speeches at the United Nations. That is not the way to solve it. We will not solve our conflict with unilateral declarations of statehood. We have to sit together, negotiate together and reach a mutual compromise, in which a demilitarized Palestinian State recognizes the one and only Jewish State.

Israel wants to see a Middle East of progress and peace. We want to see the three great religions that sprang forth from our region — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — coexist in peace and in mutual respect.

Yet the medieval forces of radical Islam, which the world just saw storming American Embassies throughout the Middle East, oppose that. They seek supremacy over all Muslims. They are bent on world conquest. They want to destroy Israel, Europe, America. They want to extinguish freedom. They want to end the modern world.

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Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister, Head of Government and Minister of Defence, Police and National Security of the Kingdom of Lesotho

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

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In the Middle East, it is about time that individual interests gave way to compassion and reason, so that the people of Palestine can enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination in our lifetimes. Two States existing side by side in peace and security have long been recognized by the international community as the only plausible route to enduring peace and stability in the region. The State of Israel must be prevailed upon to support that solution. It must stop building illegal settlements on Palestinian lands, which have the potential to render the prospects of a two-State solution irrelevant.

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The meeting rose at 2.30 p.m.

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