
INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Engaging for peace - the International Year of solidarity with the Palestinian People

Quito, 25 and 26 March 2014

and

UNITED NATIONS MEETING OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

Engaging civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean for the two-State solution

Quito, 27 March 2014

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Executive summary

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, hosted by Ecuador and organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, expressed strong

support for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and identified crucial obstacles. The world was witnessing a weakening of Palestinians at all levels, while Israel was negotiating on one hand and, on the other, was taking more land. Negotiations had to be part of the solution, despite 20 years of inconclusive talks which, rather than bringing about progress, had weakened the position of the Palestinians. Accountability must be demanded from both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership. The international community should develop and intensify efforts to de-incentivize Israel from any further illegal activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and it should support the Palestinian leadership in its State-building efforts. Participants agreed that the Latin American and Caribbean region was linked to Israel and Palestine with strong cultural, ethnic, economic, religious, political and moral ties. It was recalled that most countries of the region had recognized the State of Palestine, and countries that had not yet done so were urged to do so. It was stressed that the Governments and the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean were against the occupation, but not against Israel and its people. Meeting participants expressed their support for the Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and denounced the occupation in all its forms. It was noted not only that the status quo was unsustainable, but also that the situation on the ground was deteriorating. Recent acts of religious incitement and provocation in Jerusalem, together with the accelerating expansion of settlements, were worrisome and were identified as obstacles to peace. Participants agreed that pressure needed to be exerted on Israel so that it would abide by international law. The fundamental lack of trust between Israeli and Palestinian political leaders represented a major stumbling block preventing any progress in the political process. The media in the Latin American and Caribbean region were criticized for the lack of reporting on many facets of the occupation, which left the population of the continent unaware of the real situation on the ground. Through personal testimonies and the screening of the documentary *Five Broken Cameras*, participants witnessed the impact of the occupation on the daily lives of Palestinians. Acknowledging the harmful impact not only on the Palestinians but also on Israeli society, participants agreed on the need to connect the people on both sides who truly wanted a solution, while recognizing and weakening the spoilers. This connection had to take place at various levels and assume different forms, including within Israeli society. Participants heard about initiatives between Arab and Jewish diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean and the use of dialogue and rapprochement as a way of finding common ground and bridging their differences. Track II (people-to-people) diplomacy and the active involvement of civil society were highlighted as necessary tools, complementary to the official peace process to reach a lasting solution. Finally, as a concrete action to stop Israel's illegal practices, participants heard a strong call in favour of the boycotting of products and private companies profiting from and supporting the occupation.

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held on 25 and 26 March 2014 in Quito, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 68/12 and 68/13 of 26 November 2013. The theme of the Meeting was "Engaging for peace: the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People".
2. The Committee was represented at the Meeting by a delegation composed of Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal), Chair; Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chair; Christopher Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Riyad Mansour (Palestine). The Meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were: "Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians: obstacles and opportunities"; "Support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine"; and "The role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict".
3. At the Meeting, presentations were made by 11 speakers, including Palestinian and Israeli experts. The meeting was attended by representatives of 28 Governments, including the State of Palestine, 1 intergovernmental organization, 4 United Nations system entities, 12 civil society organizations and 6 media outlets.
4. The summary of the Chair of the Committee on the outcomes of the Meeting (see annex I) was published shortly after the Meeting concluded and is accessible on the website of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat at www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/calendar.htm.

II. Opening session

5. Leonardo Arizaga, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of Ecuador, addressing the Meeting as representative of the Ecuadorian Government, recalled the creation, in 1975, of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as an important milestone for the Palestinian cause. The Committee, which Ecuador joined in 2012, was working constantly and strenuously for the Palestinian people to be able to exercise its inalienable rights. Despite the renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on 29 July 2013, the question of Palestine remained a constant cause of concern for Ecuador. The occupying Power had contributed to mistrust and uncertainty in the negotiating process through the occupation of the territories, the relentless expansion of settlements, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the construction of the wall and continuous acts of provocation and excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians.
6. The Vice-Minister stressed that Ecuador was fully committed to defend the fraternal people of Palestine and had supported Palestine's admission as a non-Member Observer State of the United Nations on 29 November 2012. It fully backed the just cause of the Palestinian people to achieve a free and independent Palestine. In that context, Ecuador welcomed the fact that the Committee was meeting in Quito, which should be seen as a sign of Ecuador's commitment to the Palestinian cause. Recalling that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 68/12 of 26 November 2013, had proclaimed 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Ecuador wished to demonstrate its support for the Palestinian people by organizing a day of solidarity with their cause, which would include a film festival and a photo exhibition. Hosting all these events would be a way for Ecuador to reiterate its full commitment to the spirit and essence of the General Assembly resolutions that justly asserted the rights of this long-suffering people. Moreover, Ecuador hoped that Palestine would soon be admitted as a full member of the United Nations. Finally, Vice-Minister Arizaga announced the opening of the Palestinian Embassy in Ecuador in January 2014 and the planned opening of the Embassy of Ecuador in Palestine within the following few weeks, which would represent the start of a new era in relations between the two peoples.
7. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent a message to the Meeting, which was read aloud by Oscar Fernández-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The Secretary-General noted that the United Nations remained committed to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine resulting in the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized, pre-1967 borders. The current renewed round of peace negotiations presented a rare and important opening to advance the two-State solution. He called on both parties to act to reach an agreement, even if it required painful concessions. He was encouraged by the commitment of Arab leaders to uphold the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which held the promise of normalizing relations between the entire Arab region and Israel, in return for a comprehensive and just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, he remained deeply troubled by Israel's rapidly expanding settlement activity in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Recalling international law, the message added that settlements were illegal and risked rendering a two-State solution impossible.
8. The Secretary-General noted that the situation in East Jerusalem was of particular concern. Increasing incidents at the Temple Mount/Haram Al Sharif, as well as the recent Israeli Knesset debate on a bill to impose "Israeli sovereignty" over the Temple Mount/Haram Al Sharif, were deeply troubling. Such actions with regard to this highly sensitive issue could be perceived as serious acts of incitement in the wider region. Finally, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern over the recent escalation of violence between Gaza and Israel and the unacceptable firing of rockets into civilian areas, which seriously risked undermining the fragile ceasefire with Israel. He called for maximum restraint by all sides to allow the implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). In closing, he expressed the hope that the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would help create a favourable environment for fulfilling the collective international responsibility with regard to the Palestinian people and their free and prosperous future.
9. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chair of the Committee, stated that Ecuador had long been a reliable partner of the Committee, especially since it had become a full member of the Committee two years ago. The holding of this meeting in Quito was another outstanding example of the unwavering support of the Government and people of Ecuador for the Palestinian cause and the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The Committee attached great importance to the Latin American and Caribbean region. He recalled that the wave of official recognition of the State of

Palestine by Latin American countries had started in December 2010 with Brazil, immediately followed by Ecuador and others. That step had played an important role in drawing international attention to the decades-long denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and independence, and it had culminated in the submission of Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations in 2011. Pending a positive recommendation by the Security Council, the General Assembly had demonstrated its power in solidarity with the Palestinian people by adopting its historic resolution 67/19 on 29 November 2012, admitting Palestine as a United Nations Observer State. In another show of support, in November 2013, the General Assembly had proclaimed 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The objective of the Year was to raise international awareness of the main issues of the question of Palestine, including the obstacles to the ongoing peace process, particularly settlements, Jerusalem, the blockade of Gaza and the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

10. Mr. Diallo said that despite the international community's repeated calls on Israel to stop its illegal actions, the expansion of settlements continued in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, at an alarming pace, accompanied by the demolition of Palestinian homes and expropriation of Palestinian land. Settlement construction in 2013 had more than doubled compared with 2012. Just the previous week, Israel's Defence Ministry had announced that it would proceed with plans to build 2,269 new homes in settlements in the West Bank. These actions were in clear violation of articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He was encouraged, however, by the wave of announcements in the previous months by European banks and pension funds that they were severing ties with Israeli companies involved in illegal settlements. This was an important step towards establishing accountability for those who were breaking international conventions.

11. In closing, he stated that the Committee was calling for effective actions at the local, regional and international levels, within the framework of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to make 2014 a decisive year in bringing long-overdue justice to the Palestinian people through the realization of the two-State solution based on 1967 borders. In this regard, the Committee was counting on the support of the Governments and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, a region where the majority of countries had recognized the State of Palestine and Palestinian and Jewish diaspora communities coexisted peacefully, and a region that was becoming a decisive force in the shaping of the world of the twenty-first century.

12. Riyad Mansour, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, speaking as representative of the State of Palestine, stated that the Meeting was taking place at a critical juncture of the peace talks being held under the auspices of the United States and with the involvement of many other countries, including Arab countries, Non-Aligned Movement countries, Organization of Islamic Cooperation countries, Quartet representatives, Russia and China as well as many Latin American countries. In the past few months, direct talks had stalled and had been replaced by shuttle diplomacy undertaken by the United States owing to Israel's intransigence and actions contradictory to the objective of peace. The State of Palestine was participating in these negotiations in good faith and was upholding its commitments. It was showing restraint in not pursuing its legal options and refraining from adhering to international instruments and joining United Nations bodies, as its Observer State status at the United Nations entitled it to do. This commitment was agreed to in exchange for the release of 102 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails since before the signing of the Oslo Accords. Israel, however, during the nine months of negotiations, continued to act illegally by solidifying the occupation through a 123 per cent increase in settlement construction compared with 2012. At the same time, increasing incidents and incitement at Haram Al Sharif, as well as the recent Israeli Knesset debate on a bill to impose "Israeli sovereignty" over Haram Al Sharif, were in contradiction to East Jerusalem becoming the capital of the State of Palestine. He doubted that, given those illegal actions, Israel was negotiating in good faith with the goal of ending the occupation. Two benchmarks in the peace talks were approaching: the fourth and last batch of Palestinian prisoners was scheduled to be released from Israeli detention on 30 March 2014, and on 30 April 2014 the framework for the six final status issues was to be presented by US Secretary of State Kerry. However, Secretary Kerry had suggested extending the talks for an additional six months while, at the same time, Israel continued its illegal actions, such as the killing of civilians, extrajudicial executions and the blockade of Gaza. He called on Israel to negotiate in good faith and end the occupation. The international community, including Latin America and the Caribbean, had a collective responsibility to take the political, diplomatic and legal steps necessary to holding Israel accountable for its actions. The Ambassador called on all the supporters of the State of Palestine and the two-State solution, including many countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, to be partners during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in reaching a just resolution of this conflict.

13. Oscar Fernández-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, delivered the keynote presentation. At the outset, he stressed that the decision of the General Assembly to proclaim 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had shown the commitment of the international community to support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and to find lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. He emphasized that the United Nations strongly believed that Palestinian and Israeli interests were not mutually exclusive and that they depended on each other. Neither side would fully benefit from the peace, security and self-determination it deserved if the other side did not do so as well.

14. He affirmed that this was a moment of truth in the Middle East peace process, and that a durable solution was within reach and must be seized. Not only was the status quo unsustainable, but the situation on the ground was deteriorating. Palestinians had the right to realize their legitimate aspirations to self-determination and statehood; the occupation had deprived Palestinians of dignity and freedom for too long. He stated that a peaceful, secure and prosperous society could not be built without the realization of the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens. Creating a vibrant, free and independent Palestine where people lived with dignity and security necessitated a negotiated, comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, encompassing an end to the occupation under way since 1967, with a just solution to the plight of refugees and a resolution of the question of Jerusalem, would secure a viable and sovereign State for Palestinians. Concurrently, he continued, Israel had the right to live in peace and without threats to its security, within internationally recognized borders. A sovereign State of Palestine, living alongside a secure State of Israel, would provide a historic opportunity for freedom and stability for the two peoples.

15. Turning to the situation on the ground, he said that the fragile security situation underscored the urgency of finding a solution to the conflict. Lack of tangible progress on the political track could spark further violence and inflict more suffering. The accelerating illegal Israeli settlement activities undermined the prospects for a peace deal. He reiterated the grave concern of the United Nations over the previous week's announcement by Israel of plans to move forward with the construction of over 2,300 settlement units, many of which were located deep inside the West Bank. He reminded Meeting participants that settlements were illegal under international law and could not be reconciled with Israel's stated intention to pursue a two-State solution. He added that the rising tensions with respect to the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem were also very worrisome. Incitement or provocations from any quarter must cease, and the sanctity of the holy sites of all faiths must be fully respected.

16. Establishing a free, democratic Palestinian State where people could live with dignity and secured livelihoods was the best guarantee for development and sustainable peace. However, he cautioned that the lessons from the Arab Spring had underlined the fact that gaining freedom and consolidating stability in a society did not take place overnight. A culture of democracy, inclusivity, participation and dialogue must be nurtured and supported, alongside the economic opportunities and jobs necessary for a viable and stable society. The international community was, together with Palestine, actively engaged in strengthening local capacities for stability and development. Earlier in March 2014, an international conference of the Initiative for the Palestinian Economy in Prague, chaired by Tony Blair, the Quartet's representative to the Middle East Peace Process, brought together around 100 international businesspeople with the goal of incentivizing growth in the Palestinian economy. At the same time, the United Nations country team in Palestine had launched the first United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine for 2014-2016, which summarized the collective vision and response of the United Nations to prioritize development needs in the occupied Palestinian territories. International support was needed in bolstering democratic governance, civil society and gender equality in a way that aptly addressed the needs of Palestinian society. He stressed that parliamentarians and civil society organizations played a key role in advancing democratic values. With respect to South-South and triangular cooperation, he indicated that the State of Rio Grande do Sul of Brazil and the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture had signed a memorandum of understanding for technical exchange and cooperation in the field of agricultural and rural development.

17. Drawing attention to the increasingly worrisome security and humanitarian situation in Gaza, he noted that, in recent months, more rockets had been fired at

Israel and Israeli operations were causing death or injury to civilians, undermining the ceasefire understanding of November 2012. He reiterated the call to increase access and movement through the legitimate crossings in Gaza in order to alleviate the humanitarian situation. In this context, he also called on all donors to respond to the emergency appeal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees for contributions to sustain critical emergency operations.

18. Turning to Palestinian reconciliation, he underscored how progress on reconciliation, within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commitments and under the leadership of President Abbas, was an essential step for achieving the two-State solution and finding a durable peace. The peace process and reconciliation did not have to be an either/or proposition; efforts ought to be made on both fronts, in line with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). He mentioned the full support of the United Nations for prospective elections, which were central to continuing State-building efforts in a manner that would anchor the democratic nature and foundations of the Palestinian State. In closing, he reaffirmed how the United Nations, in the Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, hoped to witness the success of direct negotiations, which would bring about a comprehensive settlement based on a two-State solution. Such a peace would provide the Palestinian people with the opportunity to be free and live in dignity, which they so rightfully deserved.

19. Pablo Recalde, World Food Programme representative and country director for West Bank and Gaza, briefed Meeting participants on the humanitarian impact of the severe restrictions of the Gaza blockade, the separation wall, settlements expansion, settler violence and home demolitions affecting the livelihoods and economic activities of all Palestinians. These restrictions threatened the ability of Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity. Outlining the humanitarian impact, he pointed out that 45 per cent of the population (2 million people) had restricted access to primary health care; 34 per cent (1.6 million) were food-insecure, of whom 19 per cent lived in the West Bank and 57 per cent in the Gaza Strip; and 22 per cent (980,000) received less than 60 litres of water per day. The past 12 months had seen a 25 per cent increase in the number of home demolitions. The unemployment rate stood at 28 per cent. In order to address the needs of the 1.9 million Palestinians it was assisting, the United Nations system had launched a Strategic Humanitarian Response Plan for 2014-2016 with a budget of \$390 million that focused on the following areas of intervention: protection, education, health, water and sanitation and food security. In closing, Mr. Recalde stressed that humanitarian assistance was a key factor for maintaining a minimal level of support for a besieged population and for maintaining peace and security not only in the country, but in the region as well.

20. The Representative of Brazil welcomed the declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the holding of the Meeting in that context. While noting with satisfaction the resumption, a few months before, of direct negotiations between Israel and the State of Palestine, he warned that a failure of the peace talks would be a dangerous destabilizing factor for the Middle East region as a whole. The solution to this conflict was known to all, he stated, and the final solution was an independent and sovereign State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders. However, it was necessary to acknowledge that the political will to reach such a solution was lacking. The use, by either party, of delaying tactics demonstrated the lack of incentives to end the conflict. Brazil called on the parties to refrain from taking steps that changed the situation on the ground, hence undermining the prospects for peace. In this regard, Brazil was very concerned by the expansion of the settlements, including in East Jerusalem, and condemned them as illegal. Brazil called on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to play a critical role by exerting pressure to reach a solution in accordance with the United Nations mandate. Brazil reiterated its full support to the State of Palestine, recognized within the pre-1967 borders, and recalled that, in November 2012, it had voted in favour of Palestine's admission as an Observer State to the United Nations. Brazil, he indicated, will continue to financially support the Palestinian population with humanitarian assistance and in the reconstruction of Gaza.

21. The Ambassador of Malaysia to Chile and Ecuador, Ganeson Sivagurunathan, reaffirmed Malaysia's support for a principled solution to the question of Palestine, towards achieving a final, just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict. He stressed how Israel's intransigence proved its lack of political will to reach a solution or to engage in serious negotiations. Turning to efforts taken by the Latin American and Caribbean countries, Malaysia noted that the region had long demonstrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people. The common position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the question of Palestine was also reflected by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States at the United Nations. Finally, Malaysia recalled that Venezuela had hosted a meeting of the Committee in 2012, and that the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Ecuador had recently joined the Committee.

22. The Ambassador of Turkey to Ecuador, Korkut Güngen, first informed Meeting participants that Turkey, in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and in the context of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, would be hosting a meeting of the Committee on 12 and 13 May 2014 in Ankara. The status quo in Palestine was simply not sustainable. While the resumption of talks under the auspices of the United States offered an important opportunity to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, signals from the parties indicated that there were still substantial differences on the main issues, which diminished hopes for a breakthrough. It was high time for the parties to share a unified vision of peace. However, the current situation was in contravention of international law, with expansion of illegal settlements, tampering with Islamic religious sites, aggressive intrusion attempts against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, arbitrary arrests, torture and mistreatment of prisoners and detainees, including children, demolitions of housing and expulsions, as well as settler violence. In Jerusalem, unilateral acts to alter both the status of Al Haram Al Sharif and the cultural, religious and demographic fabric of the city risked escalating the situation. He declared that the international community must be firm in rejecting these actions. Turkey, as a member of the Committee, would continue to support the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to help alleviate the suffering of the population living under difficult circumstances in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

23. The Ambassador of Mexico to Ecuador, Jaime del Arena, reaffirmed Mexico's strong solidarity with the Palestinian people and with the Palestinian cause. He stated that the Palestinian people were discriminated against in their own land, and international law was the only mechanism for reaching a just and lasting solution to the conflict. He urged the parties to destroy the walls of ignominy and to build bridges of dialogue and solidarity as the only way forward.

24. The Ambassador of Cuba to Ecuador, Jorge Rodríguez Hernández, stated that Cuba's solidarity and principled position on the question of Palestine were well known. In particular, at the sixth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana in 1979, its leader Fidel Castro had said that over the previous 20 years the just Palestinian cause had gained the support of progressive public opinion and of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, all the resolutions adopted by the United Nations had been ignored by the occupying Power and its ally. In September 2011, at the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba said that the General Assembly had a moral, political and legal obligation to ensure the recognition of an independent Palestinian State, within pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, as a full member of the United Nations. The Minister added that such recognition should occur with or without the Security Council, with or without a veto by the United States, with or without new peace negotiations. If the Palestinians' right to self-determination and to an independent and sovereign State were recognized, the General Assembly had to act immediately on the illegality of the blockade of Gaza, the economic coercion and the segregation caused by the separation wall. At the same time, Cuba recognized Israel's right to exist and condemned in the strongest terms anti-Semitism, which had caused the Holocaust. Finally, he welcomed the holding of the Meeting in the Latin American and Caribbean region as a contribution to the efforts towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

25. The Chargé d'Affaires of Indonesia to Ecuador expressed the hope that the ongoing peace negotiations would bring about the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in the form of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. However, Israel's policies and activities, such as the expansion of settlements, which had registered a 123 per cent increase in 2013, jeopardized the negotiations. Indonesia had asserted on many occasions the illegality of settlements under international law. Indonesia had also condemned provocative activities, such as military operations in Gaza and in the West Bank, as well as the desecration of religious sites in East Jerusalem. For over 60 years, justice had been denied to the Palestinian people at the hands of a State which claimed to be an "island of stability and democracy". The continued occupation of Palestine was in utter disregard of the principles of human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes, cherished by peace-loving and truly democratic States. Indonesia called on Israel to immediately and fully withdraw from the territories occupied since 1967, as well as to show good faith in the current negotiations on the six final status issues. Indonesia, along with its unwavering political support, had lent assistance and initiated training projects, in its capacity as Co-Chair of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership for Palestinian Capacity Building

Programme, now extended for the period 2014-2019. Finally, Indonesia suggested that the meeting take into consideration two courses of action. The first was to maintain vigorous political support by making sure that Israel faced political and economic isolation should it fail to end the occupation, while at the same time encouraging more States to recognize Palestine. The second was to enlist the support of civil society, youth, the private sector and the media in support of the Palestinian cause.

26. The Ambassador of Venezuela to Ecuador, María Lourdes Urbaneja Durant, reiterated Venezuela's unwavering support for the self-determination and independence of the State of Palestine within pre-1967 borders, in accordance with all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In this regard, the proclamation by the General Assembly of 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People held a particular significance in the process of the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people. She recalled 29 November 2012 as a historic day in the General Assembly, on which the State of Palestine had been admitted as an Observer State to the Organization, opening a new chapter in the 60-year-long struggle. She informed the meeting that Venezuela had strengthened its long-standing support for the rights of the Palestinian people in 2011 by joining the Committee, and in 2013 by hosting a meeting of the Committee in Caracas. The Ambassador reiterated Venezuela's support for the State of Palestine to become a full member of the United Nations, and called on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter. Finally, she demanded that Israel halt the illegal settlement activities and lift the Gaza blockade as means to end the occupation and realize a just peace in the Middle East.

27. The Director of the United Nations System Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador delivered the message of Diego Morejón, Under-Secretary of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador. Emphasizing that the question of Palestine was one of the issues of greatest concern to the international community, Ecuador welcomed the ongoing peace negotiations as an opportunity to rescue the two-State solution and realize the vision of a viable and independent Palestinian State living side by side with a secure State of Israel. This vision was based on all relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. The occupying Power must demonstrate the political will to contribute with the good faith that these peace negotiations required. In this regard, Ecuador recalled the relevant instruments of international law, such as the Geneva Conventions, the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice and General Assembly resolution 68/82, which declared the illegality of the occupation, settlement activities, the transfer of population, and the separation wall. Finally, Ecuador reiterated its solidarity with the Palestinian people, with a view to the exercise of their inalienable rights to self-determination and freedom in an independent State of Palestine within pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. In closing, Ecuador wished to acknowledge the determination of the Palestinian Government, as expressed by its Ambassador to the United Nations, to pursue the peace negotiations and achieve a lasting solution, while recognizing the painful sacrifice that would be reflected in the establishment of the State of Palestine on only 22 per cent of historic Palestine.

III. Plenary sessions

A. Plenary session I

Advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians: obstacles and opportunities

28. Emad Burnat, Palestinian filmmaker and co-director of the Emmy-winning and Oscar-nominated documentary, *Five Broken Cameras*, which was screened at the Meeting, invited the representatives of Governments present to take action and translate diplomatic speeches into concrete steps to advance the Palestinian cause. Living in Bil'in, a village in the West Bank located 6 kilometres east of the Green Line, he had suffered all his life from the occupation, including during the 1987 Intifada. Since 2005, he explained, his village had organized weekly non-violent protests against the separation wall, becoming a symbol of non-violent resistance against the occupation. At some point, he had decided to use his camera to protect the people of Bil'in and to show the world the struggle of living under occupation. It had taken him six years to make the film, which featured his son Gibreel, born in 2005, growing up and experiencing first-hand the military presence in daily life in Palestine. While making the film, Emad had been arrested several times, he had been shot at, his friend had been killed, and several of his cameras had been destroyed; hence, the title of the film. Despite all of that, he said, his strong ties to his village and his land had given him the strength to keep filming. Turning to the political process, he pointed out that Palestinians were disillusioned after 20 years of inconclusive negotiations. More pressure on Israel was needed to come to a solution. At the same time, Palestinians needed to continue with their struggle to build a better future for future generations. He stressed that the situation on the ground had worsened over the years and the ball was in the international community's court to reach a solution. Meanwhile, he felt it was his responsibility to document what was going on and use the camera as his weapon. He called on all participants to reach out to more people in support of the Palestinian cause and to show solidarity with the Palestinian people.

29. Ziad Asali, President and founder of the American Task Force on Palestine, explained that his Washington-based, non-profit, non-partisan organization had been formed 10 years ago to allow Palestinians to discuss their own problems, seek their own solutions and speak on their own behalf. In order to reach a solution on the question of Palestine, it was necessary first of all to get the diagnosis right. In that sense, the situation had been a zero-sum game for a very long time, and the uneven balance of power between the two parties had to be disrupted at every level. Since its endorsement by the Quartet, there had been a consensus on the two-State solution, but why that consensus had not been implemented remained a burning question. Neither the politics of Palestine nor those of Israel would lead to the realization of the two-State solution. The world was witnessing a weakening of Palestinians at all levels, while Israel was negotiating, on the one hand, and taking more land, on the other. In his view, it was necessary to connect the people on both sides who truly wanted a solution, while identifying and weakening the spoilers.

30. Turning to the obstacles to a solution, he pointed to the disconnect between the dishonesty of the policy of two States and the politics of two States. The fundamental mistrust between Israeli and Palestinian leaders was also present within each camp between the leadership and the respective population. Even though there were people on both sides who did not really believe in the two-State solution and were still hoping to expand their presence in the other territory, there could be no military solution. He stressed, however, that negotiations had to be part of the solution, despite 20 years of inconclusive talks which, rather than bringing about progress, had weakened the position of the Palestinians. In this context, it was necessary to improve the Palestinians' competitive ability, including to negotiate. At the same time, referring to Emad Burnat's remarks, he underscored the need to improve the living conditions on the ground for all Palestinians. This was not only the struggle of the Palestinians themselves, but was part and parcel of the responsibility of the international community. Adding another layer to the complexity, he remarked that, for a long time, the Palestinian issue had been a priority for Middle East peace and for the countries of the region, whereas now, while they were still emotionally supportive, it seemed as if those countries were preoccupied with other dynamics and crises in the region. That, however, was a mere excuse, as the Palestinian issue was a strategic goal for the region, and as such must be resolved.

31. Turning to the opportunities for a solution, he lauded the truly active engagement of the United States, through Secretary of State John Kerry, in the latest cycle of negotiations. It was paramount, he stated, that negotiations be kept alive, even though they seemed inconclusive. The involvement of the European Union, through political and legal steps imposing restrictions on products from the settlements, was also a positive development, as it put accountability on the table and helped provide a disincentive to Israel. Accountability must be demanded of both the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership. In this regard, Palestinian good governance as well as political and institutional reform must be encouraged and reinvigorated. He stressed that settlement expansion and home demolitions were the most detrimental obstacles to peace and must be stopped, including with support from within Israel, where a political space in favour of this course of action existed. In closing, he stressed that the negotiation process must be preserved while, at the same time, institutions and State-building programmes must be improved on the ground.

32. Yaniv Shacham, Campaigns and New Media Manager at Peace Now, an Israeli non-governmental organization (NGO) operating for over 36 years, said he was speaking for all the Israelis who wanted peace and were fighting for it against the Israeli Government. The first issue to underline, he stated, was that peace and the two-State solution were as much in the interest of and needed for Israel as they were for Palestine. With a series of maps, he showed the evolution of settlement expansion from 1967 to 2012, with 120 settlements, 96 illegal outposts and 341,000 settlers, not including the 200,000 settlers living in East Jerusalem. It was important to note, he added, that 68 per cent of settlers had moved to the West Bank after the Oslo Accords of 1993; hence, the Israeli Government had continued expanding settlements, under the pretext that everything would be discussed and determined at the negotiating table.

33. The Oslo Accords, he continued, had divided the West Bank into A, B and C control areas. Area C, under full Israeli control, and representing 60 per cent of

the West Bank, was inhabited by settlers, who represented only 12 per cent of the West Bank population. The jump in settlement expansion had reached the dramatic peak of a 123 per cent increase in 2013, during the US-led negotiation process. He pointed to settlements in Ariel, the planned E1 area north of Jerusalem and Efrat as examples of threats to the two-State solution. Despite these figures, he believed that there were positive signs that gave room to optimism for the two-State solution, including the proposed plan put forward under the Geneva Initiative. According to that proposal, the absolute majority of settlers would remain under Israeli sovereignty in well-known settlement blocks and would not have to evacuate from their homes, while Palestinians would receive alternative land in land swaps on the basis of a 1:1 ratio. Only settlements scarcely inhabited and located deep within the West Bank would have to be evacuated. It was worth noting, he said, that despite all the focus on this issue, settlers represented only 12 per cent of the overall West Bank population and 4 per cent of the total Israeli population. Settlers who would have to be moved as part of an agreement represented only 1.8 per cent of the Israeli population.

34. With regard to public opinion, he said that all the polls carried out by Israeli and international research centres had confirmed that an absolute majority of Israeli and Palestinians supported a peace agreement. Moreover, the vision of settlers as means for a “greater Israel” had not been able to sweep the Israeli public, who did not see the West Bank and the settlements as a true part of Israel. As a testimony to that, during the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, the Israeli population had not opposed the withdrawal of 8,000 settlers. In addition, the new social justice movement that had broken out in Israel in 2011 protested against the misuse of public funds, including in support of settlements. Moreover, despite claims to the contrary by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the most recent elections in 2013 had put in place a majority at the Knesset that would support a peace agreement. In closing, he declared that despite all the difficulties and time working against us, despite years of Israeli right-wing propaganda and lobbying, the situation on the ground had not yet blocked the possibility of the two-State solution.

35. Adriana Mabilia, a Brazilian journalist, introduced her research on how Palestine was perceived and presented by the Latin American media. Pointing to the phenomenon of “breaking news” becoming part of entertainment rather than being just information and analysis, she had decided to delve into the issue and research how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was being narrated and explained by the media, especially in Brazil. In reading the testimonies of some of the Palestinians she had interviewed, the bias and one-sidedness had become evident. Describing how Palestinians saw themselves reflected in the media, she indicated that they wished journalists reported the story from both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives, thereby providing the reader with a comprehensive picture of the truth. Referring to the use of the Internet as a main source of information, Mabilia urged journalists not to be “lazy” and to go in person to see for themselves the reality on the ground and form their own opinions before writing their pieces. Unfortunately, she lamented, journalists did not travel to Palestine to witness and report the daily situation with regard to the occupation, but only when tragic “newsworthy” events occurred.

36. In describing how Palestinians described the occupation, the physical limitations, the lack of access and the confinement, she stressed that the media never used “human” details to explain the painful existence of the Palestinians, but rather used impartial or political terms that did not allow the reader to connect at an emotional level. Inviting the audience to consider journalists not as “enemies” but as a useful part of society, she noted their contribution to advancing important causes such as that of Palestine. While travelling in Palestine, Mabilia had collected the testimonies of Palestinians, who all referred to the three main forms of the occupation: the separation wall, the checkpoints and the settlements. They had also lamented that Israel did not allow or tolerate any form of resistance, even peaceful resistance, and used physical and psychological intimidation to keep control over the population and the territory. The sense of exhaustion was also tangible, she said, as attested to by a Palestinian woman: “In this place, you’ll hear the same stories over and over. I’m 37, [my parents] are 80, my oldest son is 17; we’ll all tell you of more or less the same experiences. Since our territory was occupied 60 years ago, we all hurt in the same way. Suffering has been passed from parent to child. Very little has changed.” In closing, she wondered what could be the cause of the apathy of the international community in face of that occupation and suffering, if not the military power of Israel and the United States.

37. The ensuing discussion touched upon many issues surrounding the question of Palestine, including water, refugees, support by the international community and the possibility of change stemming from within Israeli society. Regarding possible action by the international community, the labelling of products from settlements was identified as a priority, so as to exert pressure on Israel. In this sense, a speaker noted that bona fide efforts were also being made in the United States, and the international community could be helpful in supporting the US in taking bolder steps. The European Union, in particular, was taking positions on the issue of settlements that were having an impact on the policies of the United States. The Latin American and Caribbean region could play a similar role. Regarding the role of Israeli society and the diaspora, several participants noted the need to start a conversation about the value of working with Jewish organizations. Israel needed a Palestinian State if it wanted to remain a democratic Jewish State. Seventy per cent of Jewish Americans were in favour of the two-State solution; within Israeli society, including the security and intelligence apparatus, some understood this solution to be strategic for the future of Israel, while others did not. For that reason, a speaker noted, it was important to reach out and connect with those who viewed the two-State solution as the only possible solution. Some participants expressed scepticism at the possibility that change could come from within Israeli society. However, the representative of Peace Now stressed that his organization believed in the “politics of hope”, and suggested that rather than talking to Israelis about the consequences of a lack of a solution, we should talk to them about the possibilities, the political and economic opportunities. Peace Now had played this role for 36 years, speaking about the two-State solution when no one had even conceived of it. However, responding to a question regarding the 20 per cent of the Arab- Israeli population (including Bedouins) living in unrecognized villages such as El-Arakiv, which had been demolished more than 150 times by Israeli authorities, Peace Now pointed out the complex struggle within Israeli society over the issue of the Arab minority. Other challenges and internal issues in Israeli society included the divergence between religious and orthodox approaches, on the one hand, and non-religious approaches, on the other, as well as the contrast between the wealthy population and the 1 million Israelis living below the poverty line. Once the issue of the conflict with Palestine had been solved, Israel would have to deal with issues within its own society. Peace Now was optimistic that a solution would be reached, but it would take time to rebuild trust between Israelis and Palestinians. A participant pointed to the issue of water “apartheid” as defined by the European Commission (today, a settler in the Jordan Valley used 81-times more water than a Palestinian in the West Bank), and called for accountability on the part of the Israeli water management company, Mekorot. A speaker recalled that an agreement on water had recently been signed among Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis, and stated that much more could be done on the issue. With regard to refugees, Israel would have to agree to find a solution, and the Geneva Initiative proposals could serve as a good basis for an agreement. Finally, a speaker noted that the biggest deficit was the lack of confidence that the two-State solution was possible, so people, as well as Governments, needed to believe in it and continue pushing forward.

B. Plenary session II

Support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine

38. Ibrahim M. K. Alzeben, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Brazil, paid tribute to the Latin American and Caribbean region’s strong historic, cultural, ethnic, religious and economic ties with the Arab region and its support for the question of Palestine. He recalled that in 1947, Latin America and the Caribbean had played an important role in voting for the partition of Palestine and the recognition of the State of Israel. In 2010, Brazil, Ecuador and all the countries of the region that recognized the State of Palestine had again played a crucial role in support of the just Palestinian cause. However, he added, more could be done in this region by the Arab and Jewish communities alike to oppose the occupation and the settlement activities in particular. Turning to Brazil, he stressed that it had been exemplary in its support for the cause of Palestine and had been the first country in Latin America to recognize the State of Palestine, in 2010. Brazil also supported reconstruction efforts in the West Bank and Gaza. Brazil had participated in the 2007 Annapolis conference and had welcomed the expansion of the Quartet to reflect the international dimension of the question of Palestine. Brazil, he continued, had also hosted the “Lado a lado” seminar in 2012, a face-to-face meeting between Israelis and Palestinians aimed at exploring ways for peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Brazilian civil society had been very active, including through the World Social Forum, held in the city of Porto Alegre in 2012. Not only Brazil, he continued, but also the Latin American and Caribbean region, along with the Non-Aligned Movement, led by Cuba in 1974, had been building the foundation for the inalienable rights that the Palestinians dreamed of enjoying.

39. In particular, during this International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he called on all participants to improve the collective level of coordination and effectiveness to gather more resources in support of Palestine. Hoping that the Meeting would produce an agenda for action with a direct impact on the ground, he urged all participants to take the following steps: push for the adoption of legislation in all the respective countries to celebrate 29 November as the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; denounce the illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory; denounce settlement activities and the separation wall as

illegal; boycott products from the settlements; introduce into academic programmes curricula and materials explaining the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and create university lectureships on the Middle East and the question of Palestine. He added that Israeli practices contrary to international law should be denounced, as silence was tantamount to endorsing the occupation.

40. Ambassador Alzeben stressed that while Palestinians were against the occupation and all its adverse consequences, they were not against Israel and its people. Both peoples shared a glorious past and were sharing a painful present; they had the right to share a bright future, with two sovereign States living side by side in peace. He was convinced that it was possible, and that that goal could be achieved by negotiating on the basis of respect for international law. The refugees awaited justice, the prisoners awaited their freedom, and the State of Palestine awaited its due sovereignty and independence. In that struggle, Palestinians counted on the support of the Latin American and Caribbean region.

41. Diego Arria, political analyst and former Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, stated that Venezuela had always had a firm stance on the question of Palestine. During his tenure at the United Nations, his country had voted in favour of several United Nations resolutions condemning the occupation and the Gaza blockade. He recalled his participation in such a meeting convened by the Committee in Santiago in 2008, and noted that since then the situation on the ground had worsened. Against the background of the “crisis fatigue” affecting the attention of the international community on the question, he praised Enad Burnat’s documentary, as it put the finger on the “humanity” of the victims and on how the conflict touched the personal lives of Palestinians living under occupation. Agreeing with Ziad Azali’s remarks, he stressed that it was crucial for the international community to identify the true partners working in support of the cause and the spoilers who were using the question of Palestine for their own ends. In this regard, he welcomed the remarks and position of Peace Now and recognized that Israeli organization as a genuine partner in the search for a just solution. Stressing the importance of solidarity, he urged Latin American and Caribbean countries to show their solidarity through concrete actions and deeds rather than just words. Finally, he encouraged participants to reach out to communities and civil society in their respective countries, as their role in support of the Palestinian cause was as important as that of their Governments.

42. Juan Raúl Ferreira, President of the Uruguay-Israel Cultural Institute, recalled having participated in the meeting of the Committee held in Montevideo in 2011, and stressed Uruguay’s long tradition in support of the two-State solution. At that meeting, he had said that Uruguay had a “vocation to export peace and tolerance to the Middle East”. He noted that Uruguay hosted a large Jewish community living harmoniously side by side with a large Palestinian community. He indicated that soon after the meeting in Montevideo, which had opened the door for many exchanges between the two communities, he had been appointed Ombudsman for the People and President of the national human rights institution. He mentioned that because, while he was not representing any particular institution per se, Uruguayan human rights organizations and civil society in general were working for the benefit of the Israeli and Palestinian people alike. He then mentioned another important development since that conference: the recognition by Uruguay of the State of Palestine. The ceremony had taken place in the presence of representatives of both Palestinian and Jewish communities, in testimony of the consensus existing in the country around this important political step. Following the Montevideo conference, the self-convened “Montevideo Consensus” was formed as a means of creating a space to discuss ways to reach a peaceful solution to the conflict. It was now up to the Latin American and Caribbean participants of the Meeting in Quito to take this process forward.

43. He stated that additional progress since the Montevideo meeting had been seen in the more active role that Uruguay had taken in the international community as a human rights advocate and a promoter of peace initiatives. Uruguay had served twice as a member of the Security Council and might have an opportunity to be elected again as a member of the United Nations body in charge of peace and security. Finally, he pointed out that in the past few years, civil society had grown in relevance and had been playing a much more active role on the international stage, especially in the spheres of peace and democratization. He noted that, in 2014, Uruguay, after 30 years of democracy, through the universal periodic review conducted by the Human Rights Council, had put in place mechanisms that would enable it to become a model country in terms of respect for human rights. As an example of this progress, he explained that at its first universal periodic review, in 2010, Uruguay had accepted 185 recommendations put forward by Member States, of which 77 encouraged the country to further integrate into the international community and offer its good offices in peace processes. The point was that Uruguay was ready and committed to serve the international community in the interest of peace in the Middle East or anywhere else peace was a distant goal. In closing, he urged the international community to cooperate with Uruguay, as it was ready and willing to make a contribution to peace, including in regional organizations such as the Union of South American Nations, an organization comprising member States committed to friendship with both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. In this context, he urged the Union to play a unifying role in the foreign policy of the whole region, with a view to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

44. The ensuing discussion revolved around the issues of accountability, the role of the media and the effects of boycotts. Regarding the latter, participants agreed that the occupation should come at a cost for Israel. At present, the occupation was very advantageous as Israel profited from Palestinian resources, including land and water, without any form of accountability. Participants pointed to examples of boycotts of Israeli companies and called for more concrete steps to be taken in that direction. Nonetheless, several participants stressed that the conflict was not between the two peoples or the two communities; hence, it was necessary to denounce and boycott the occupation, not Israelis. On the other hand, the Palestinian economy needed to be stimulated, and Latin American and Caribbean countries could contribute by supporting trade and small businesses. Religious tourism was identified as a potential significant source of income for the State of Palestine if managed in a way that both States, not only Israel, could derive economic benefit from it. With respect to trade, participants discussed the potential for expanding it with Latin American and Caribbean countries. It was noted that an agreement on free trade between the State of Palestine and some Latin American countries, including Brazil, had been signed, but that ratification by the Brazilian parliament was still pending. In a similar vein, cultural and student exchanges were also good practices that could bring about positive change. One participant noted that an agreement between the universities of São Paulo and Al-Quds was imminent. The Israeli programme “Taglit” and the Palestinian programme “Bethlehem ISI”, which enabled young people to discover Israel and Palestine, respectively, were other examples of ways to bring about change at the grass-roots level. Turning to the issue of information, participants discussed the role that the media could play in disseminating reliable information about the occupation. It was noted that most people in this part of the world were not aware of the situation on the ground. By the same token, schoolbooks and education were identified as important tools for teaching young generations of Israelis and Palestinians the unbiased truth about their common history. The work of Israeli scholar Nurit Peled was put forward as an example in this regard. Finally, discussing examples from the history of the subcontinent, such as “Operation Condor” in the 1970s, participants focused on the issue of Israel’s accountability for war crimes and violations of international and humanitarian law. The Israeli NGO “New Profile”, which focused on drawing attention to the militarization of Israeli society and supporting Israelis who refused to serve in the Israel Defense Forces, was cited as an example of action by civil society. However, more needed to be done at the international level. The region had a mixed record on the issue; while some countries had put in place mechanisms and legislation to end impunity and develop transitional justice processes, others lagged behind. Overall, however, participants felt that the region could contribute to advancements on issues of accountability and the prosecution of such egregious violations as a way to exert pressure on the occupying Power.

C. Plenary session III

The role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict

45. Arlene E. Clemesha, Professor of Arab History at the Centre for Arab Studies of the University of São Paulo, referred to the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, and emphasized that solidarity was crucial given the failures of the United Nations system to guarantee the realization of Palestinians’ inalienable rights, such as national self-determination, sovereignty, the right of return and respect for basic human rights. She affirmed that the dynamic that explained the exclusion of Palestinians from the club of nations and from the principle of universal national self-determination was the anachronistic, yet prevalent, narrative that supported the dehumanization of an entire people for the purpose of colonization. This dynamic, she continued, dated back a hundred years to 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I, at which the representatives of Syria and Egypt were prevented from negotiating the independence of their respective countries under the pretext that Arabs were not ready for self-government, while the United Kingdom and France were allowed to establish imperial domains, including the British Mandate for Palestine from 1922 to 1947. Despite all the progress made on human rights and decolonization since then, Palestinians still suffered from the subjugation of the occupation. Moreover, Palestinians who resisted illegal occupation of their Territory, including through non-violent resistance as in Bil’in or other non-violent actions, such as boycotts, were depicted individually and collectively as terrorists,

supposedly endangering the existence of the State of Israel. In fact, one should not deny or tolerate the existence of violent actions by Palestinians against Israel, or fall short of condemning any act of terrorism against civilians, from whichever party it might come. However, one should do so while also condemning the attempt to distort reality, and recognize that the first violence committed had been the illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory and the ongoing and constant violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. It was necessary to point out, she stated, that the occupation of the Palestinian Territory was maintained, on the one hand, by the brutal force of an extremely well-equipped army and, on the other, by the injection of \$3 billion annually. The whole system of occupation and collective punishment, including the separation wall, checkpoints, prisoners and ongoing violations of human rights, were supposedly necessary to guarantee the security of Israel. The perverse process of criminalization of the victim and victimization of the occupier was necessary to allow the de facto annexation of Palestinian land through the settlements.

46. While in the 1970s and 1980s, she explained, the Palestinian people had been denied the right to resist and the PLO had been described as a terrorist organization, today it was the existence of Hamas which was used to depict the Palestinians as people who did not want peace but rather the destruction of the State of Israel. In fact, she continued, the system of occupation needed Hamas, as much as Hamas needed Israel, in order to maintain the oppressive and punitive regime in Gaza.

47. In order to break that cycle, which was harmful for all people who wished to achieve peace, be they Israelis or Palestinians, one needed to refer back to the ideals of solidarity. Examples were the actions of civil society, with the involvement of young Israelis and Palestinians working side by side to uphold international law and campaigning to boycott products coming from settlements and businesses linked to settlements. The power of this solidarity-based action proved that it was the only action capable of threatening the occupation. In fact, the occupation ultimately threatened the position and legitimacy of Israel in the world. In closing, she stated that only real and effective solidarity could forge bonds of trust and brotherhood and sisterhood among Israelis and Palestinians, which were necessary to create a paradigm of collective, democratic and non-exclusionary existence for the State of Palestine and Israel.

48. Edward (Edy) Kaufman, Senior Research Scholar at the Department of Government and Politics, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, focused his presentation on the role of the Arab and Jewish diasporas in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In many cases, he said, diasporas maintained sustained concern for the situation in their countries of origin, particularly at times of violent disputes. He pointed to the phenomenon called “long-distance nationalism”, which referred to the fact that many members of the diasporas held more extreme positions than those still experiencing the conflict on a day-to-day basis in the homeland. Armenians, Kurds, Irish-Catholics and Sri Lankan Tamils were examples of this tendency in diasporas. These groups could be defined as “ethno-political”, as their stand vis-à-vis the conflict was not ideological, but rather based on a shared ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity. In Latin America in particular, he explained, that the Consensus for Palestinian-Israeli Peace, comprising members of the local Palestinian and Jewish communities, was looking at ways to work together in support of the peace process, based on their shared values. The Consensus project was not theoretical, but rather a field-based approach, with “chapters” in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. The “laboratory” existing in this region could also be very useful for Europe and the United States as an example of cooperation between Palestinians and Jews supporting the two-State solution.

49. By way of background, he recalled that Arabs and Jews had converged in significant numbers in their migration to Latin America and the Caribbean, mostly since the early twentieth century. Drawing a distinction between voluntary diaspora as part of economic emigration and involuntary diaspora owing to violent conflict or exile, he pointed to the different nature of the Jewish and Palestinian communities living abroad. However, the Latin American and Caribbean region had also experienced a growing threat and the actual use of violence related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hence, instead of “exporting” their previous good experience of coexistence to the fractured Middle East, diasporas were now perceived as “importing” this conflict into Latin America. Back in the Holy Land, in spite of the growing impact of the peace spoilers driven primarily by fanatic religious convictions (i.e., Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Islamists in Gaza), there were still Israeli and Palestinian NGOs that were investing their energy in support of the current negotiations.

50. Turning to the presence of Jews and Arabs in Latin America and the Caribbean, he noted that in recent years there had been some 500,000 Jews in the region, of which around 30 per cent had returned to Israel, while the numbers of Arabs were much larger, in the millions, with Palestinians constituting a portion of them. The largest Palestinian community in Latin America and the Caribbean was based in Chile, followed by El Salvador and Uruguay.

51. In closing, he stressed the need to bridge the two diasporas through resilience, mutual trust and a people-to-people approach. Back in the shared homeland, such efforts needed to be supported not only by Governments around the world, but also by their Latin American and Caribbean brothers and peacebuilders.

52. Mariela Volcovich, a representative of the Argentine chapter of the Consensus for Palestinian-Israeli Peace and a psychologist by training, outlined the purpose of her organization as a group of citizens from different Latin American and Caribbean countries who, in their personal capacities, strived to contribute to peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. An Argentine national, Volcovich stressed that in her country in particular, the goal of the Consensus was to create a space for dialogue and facilitate education and training that would enable Israelis and Palestinians to recognize their common heritage and identity. This was particularly important to combat the prejudice and ignorance present in the communities.

53. Since the past century, Arabs and Jews had settled in Latin America and the Caribbean and found ways to live together harmoniously. Oftentimes however, as illustrated by Edward Kaufman, diasporas had the tendency to re-create the polarized and sometimes violent dynamics of the conflict in the homeland, in what was referred to as “long-distance nationalism”. This animosity negatively influenced relations between the two communities, resulting in hostility. The idea behind the Consensus, she explained, was to create an opportunity for dialogue, taking advantage of the physical distance from the actual conflict. Moreover, members of the organization were convinced that Latin America and the Caribbean could play a positive and active role in conflict transformation, complementary to the efforts undertaken at the intergovernmental level. Volcovich presented some regional examples, such as “Lado a lado” an initiative of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that brought together Arab and Jewish leaders of South American institutions to work together on multitrack diplomacy; the request by Argentine civil society that President Christina Fernandez de Kirchner take an active role in supporting mediation efforts vis-à-vis the conflict in Gaza; and similar calls to the Governments of the region by the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum. Despite the number of regional initiatives, she admitted, few had resulted in conflict transformation at the people-to-people level that would go beyond the usual intergovernmental processes. While saluting the commitment and the initiatives of Latin America and the Caribbean in this regard, she encouraged the region to pursue these efforts in a more systematic manner and with specific and concrete actions.

54. Omar Al Kaddour, another representative of the Argentine chapter of the Consensus, at the outset stressed that he, like all his fellow members of organization, fully supported the two-State solution, including a just solution to all the final status issues on the question of Palestine. He recalled his Arab origins and said he was a peace activist focusing on efforts to build a culture of meeting, of rapprochement. He explained that members of the Argentine chapter met regularly to discuss ideas. A recent example of that engagement was a workshop on multitrack diplomacy, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Buenos Aires, that had been attended by some of the members of the Consensus who were also present at the Meeting in Quito. The Consensus viewed “people diplomacy” as complementary to the traditional intergovernmental track. Another initiative, he continued, had taken place in December 2012 and January 2013, when the chapter linked its work with the executive and legislative branches of the State, even bringing to the attention of the presidency a plan of action on possible concrete ways to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Among the ideas that had been put forward was a high-level conference on Israeli-Palestinian peace among the members of the Union of South American Nations combined with a grassroots conference. Unfortunately at that time, owing to political constraints in the region, the idea could not take shape. He then outlined another initiative organized by the chapter focused on discussions with parliamentarians, including a planned visit to the Knesset by members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Argentine Senate to meet with the two-State solution caucus and have an exchange on the Arab Peace Initiative. Some weeks prior, he continued, chapter members had been able to accompany a rabbi, a priest and members of the Muslim community on a trip to the Holy Land coordinated by the Institute of Interreligious Dialogue in Buenos Aires. They had had the unique opportunity to meet with Palestinian civil servants, parliamentarians and the Orthodox Patriarch, and had completed the initiative in Rome, where they had met with the Pope. Mr. Al Kaddour emphasized that the organization’s approach was to strike a political, ethnic and religious balance between the two sides and, in keeping with its unbiased position, devote an equal

amount of time and attention to both, providing the Consensus with greater legitimacy. He then highlighted some of the most recent initiatives undertaken by Pope Francis, who had called on world leaders to avoid military action and/or to join him in a day of prayer. He stressed that the Pope's stance combined spirituality with political action. Admitting that he was an optimist, Al Kaddour highlighted the importance of focusing on the "humanism" equally present in Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Emphasizing the human side of all of us would allow the cultures to meet and promote a shared vision of a world in which love for the other, dignity, human rights and peace were at the core of our existence. These principles were the basis of the document entitled "South American commitment to Israeli-Palestinian peace", drafted by the Consensus members of present at the Meeting in Quito.

55. In the discussion that followed, speakers focused on divestment from and the boycotting of Israel institutions, including Israeli universities. In particular, the discussion flagged the Brazilian Government as the largest contractor with Israeli military firms in South America and the second largest in the world, in contradiction to its verbal denouncement of the occupation. It was remarked that South-South cooperation had a long tradition of fighting against colonization and oppression, and the paradox regarding the case of Brazil was blatant and needed to be highlighted. Support for boycotts was also discussed. Regarding the issue of apartheid practices by Israel, it was noted that 60 per cent of Palestinians living in the West Bank had never visited Jerusalem and 20 per cent had never seen the Mediterranean Sea. The network of checkpoints and segregation that amounted to collective punishment, the discriminatory laws adopted by the Knesset that *de facto* degraded Israeli Arabs to second-class citizens, and laws regarding intermarriage and family reunification and residence permits for East Jerusalem were all mentioned as part and parcel of an apartheid regime. One speaker stressed how the rhetoric of accusation and pointing fingers based on historical events was counterproductive and harmful to Palestinian and Israeli reconciliation efforts. Likewise, it was noted that while the efforts aimed at creating a space for dialogue were not enough to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they were nonetheless the contribution of many willing to walk the path of understanding and openness in view of finding a lasting peace.

IV. Closing session

56. Diego Morejón, Under-Secretary of International Organizations representing the host country, stated that Ecuador had always taken a very clear stance vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. It had supported the peace process based on international law, both in the context of the United Nations since the inception of the Committee and within the Non-Aligned Movement. Ecuador recognized Palestine as a sovereign and independent State within its pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. The holding of the Meeting in Quito represented Ecuador's renewed commitment to and unwavering solidarity with the cause of Palestine and the suffering of its people. He announced that, in January 2014, the State of Palestine had opened an Embassy in Ecuador, and soon Ecuador would reciprocate by opening an embassy in the State of Palestine to strengthen the mutual bonds in all possible ways. Mr. Morejón emphasized that the Meeting had offered the opportunity to discuss many well-known issues related to the question of Palestine from an authentic and more personal point of view that went beyond the many formal United Nations resolutions. Issues concerning brotherhood, exchanges between peoples, and youth that directly touched the lives of those suffering from the conflict were debated by participants. He reiterated Ecuador's support and availability as a venue for forums and dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis.

57. Hani A. Remawi, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Ecuador, stated that the struggle and sacrifices endured by the Palestinian people could not be diminished to less than what represented a just peace, and no compromises could be made on the pre-1967 borders, the Jordan Valley, East Jerusalem or the solution of the issue of refugees, pursuant to United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948. While recognizing that the State of Israel had been based, at its inception, on the values of democracy, pluralism and equality, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, he wondered if those values were still valid today, as the Government of Israel seemed to disavow them. Peace was justice, he declared, not murder, walls or settlements. There was no road ahead other than a two-State solution, and it was time that Israel prepared its people for peace.

58. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chair of the Committee, in his closing statement, commended the Ecuadorian authorities for their hospitality and the full support of Ecuador for the Palestinian cause. During the three days of deliberations, he continued, many useful ideas had been submitted about what could be done during the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In particular, participants had noted that more serious and concrete action must be taken against Israel's illegal settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Committee had never questioned the legitimate existence of the State of Israel, he stated, but the continued illegal settlement policies of Israel as the occupying Power needed to be addressed by the international community. He noted with encouragement the recent wave of announcements by major European banks and pension funds severing ties with Israeli companies involved in illegal settlements. The Committee also supported calls by various Governments for the labelling of merchandise produced in settlements, so to give consumers a choice. In closing, he said that the Committee counted on the initiative and resourcefulness of all its partners in designing and undertaking advocacy and mobilization initiatives in the Latin American and Caribbean region and all over the world during the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

V. United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace

59. At the United Nations Meeting of Civil Society in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, the topics of presentations and of discussion included: methods for reaching decision makers and politicians; the work of political parties, trade unions, foundations and other civil society actors in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace; the impact and educational role of academic institutions and think tanks; and the role of the Arab and Jewish communities in the region.

60. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chair of the Committee, opened the Meeting by recalling and commending the many initiatives spearheaded by civil society organizations and activists all over the world in mobilizing public opinion and influencing decision makers regionally and internationally on the question of Palestine. The voice of civil society organizations was fundamental to advocacy and the advancement of the Palestinian cause in all of its aspects. He stressed that in 2014, proclaimed the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People by the General Assembly, the Committee had decided to dedicate the Meeting to the discussion on ways to bring international and regional civil society organizations together to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace. The role and contribution of civil society were indispensable, he concluded, to the success of the peace process and to reaching a just and permanent solution to the conflict.

61. Pedro Charbel, a member of the São Paulo Palestinian Front, stated at the outset that he actively supported the boycott of Israeli products linked to the occupation. He called for a change in the structure of incentives. Specific actions were needed to support the boycott and exert pressure on Israel to fulfil its obligations. Wide support for the boycott was necessary. According to Charbel, civil society was demanding a boycott of and divestment from companies that collaborated with the Israeli occupation. Those companies should be held accountable. In that regard, he mentioned initiatives such as the divestment of some churches from Caterpillar Inc. because of it was instrumental to the destruction of Palestinian homes. He also called on civil society to take action to help Palestinians, who were subject to daily assaults and violence. Charbel emphasized the crucial role of youth, as he believed that young people had a responsibility to act. He noted that there were many movements in civil society in favour of international law. Recalling the illegality of the separation wall in accordance with the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, Charbel underscored that the reason to urge Israel to comply with its obligations was to uphold international law. He urged all States parties to the Geneva Convention to ensure that Israel respected international humanitarian law. Charbel concluded by stating that neither the occupation nor the apartheid practices were normal situations. He stressed that working towards justice and peace required support for co-existence and dialogue. He called upon the Meeting participants to support three concrete actions: ending the occupation and colonization; dismantling the separation wall while recognizing Israel's rights; and respecting, protecting and defending the rights of the Palestine refugees so that they could return home.

62. Leonel Groisman, representative of the Uruguayan chapter of the Consensus for Palestinian-Israeli Peace, spoke about the work done in Uruguay over the previous three years by his Organization within the Jewish and Palestinian diasporas, stressing its important role in the construction of a dialogue for peace. The Consensus believed that peace was possible and, given that the traditional method of settling that conflict had not been successful, had decided to try another one. It also believed in a civil society actively engaged for peace. Track-II diplomacy, in which civil society expressed itself freely, was another path to peace, playing a pivotal role in relation to both the frustration of the people and the credibility of organizations. Diasporas were an example of civil society ready to overcome prejudices, find common ground and bring the two communities closer together, rather than thinking of each other as enemies. He stressed that such diasporas were not made up only of Jews and Palestinians, but also comprised Uruguayans, neighbours, friends, partners and compatriots. They were a part of the national community, and therefore the actions of diasporas were building links within the society. Civil society should take charge of the process to consolidate

peace in the Middle East. Mr. Groisman cited the Oslo accords as an example of how the most creative solutions originated within civil society. Hence, this track-II or people diplomacy did not replace the official track, but rather was complementary to it and a useful tool for preparing people for peace.

63. Rafael Guendelman Hales, a videographer and member of the Chilean chapter of the Consensus, showed a six-minute video that he described as “a trip from Jerusalem to the Jordan River”. He recalled situations of inequality between social classes in Chile, the discrimination against the indigenous population and unequal access to education. Having witnessed such injustice in his own country, he felt close to the situation in Palestine. He said that as a professional videographer he was interested in observing his surroundings. In his view, the scenery influenced people. In 2012 in the West Bank, he had created Intermediate Diaries, which consisted of several reports on specific situations that explained the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He felt that the media could push the boundaries of the discourse and show evidence that would raise awareness about the plight of the Palestinian people. In conclusion, he stated that art invited reflection and inspired people take to concrete action.

64. Maia Guiskin, a founding member of the Chilean chapter of Consensus, presented her group as diverse in terms of age and professional background and illustrated the work done during its year of existence. She pointed out that Chile hosted the largest Palestinian community in Latin America, numbering between 300,000 and 500,000, which exerted great influence in society through media and politics, and had solid representation in Parliament (around 8 per cent). On the contrary, the Jewish population numbered only between 15,000 and 20,000. As an anthropologist who had authored research on Latin American Jewish communities and their relations with Israel, she recalled that most of the Jews and Palestinians who had migrated to Chile had arrived at the same time, in the early twentieth century. While they had initially enjoyed good relations, Guiskin believed that those relations had worsened over the years and both communities had become polarized and quite radical, owing to the phenomenon of “long-distance nationalism”. She believed that while the recipe of dialogue and working together promoted by the Consensus was not enough, it had had a real impact on the rest of the Chilean society and was needed to create a core of mutual trust among the two communities.

65. Abder Rahim Jbara Husein, a member of the Uruguayan chapter of the Consensus, contributed to the Meeting with touching and compelling episodes from his personal life story. He took the audience on a journey from his birth in Palestine, under the British Mandate, and his childhood memories of the time when the two communities shared a peaceful coexistence, to the first clashes between Palestinians and Israelis, to the start of full hostilities and his family’s subsequent migration to Chile. Now a member of the Uruguayan chapter, he strongly condemned the occupation and underlined that the many years of peace talks had been to no avail, owing to the unwillingness of Israel to negotiate in good faith. He concluded by stressing that Palestinians had a right to their citizenship, and it was about time that they lived in peace and enjoyed justice in the Palestinian Territory.

66. During the discussion, participants stressed that peace was possible. Representatives of civil society organizations expressed their readiness to work with other organizations represented at the Meeting to reach this goal, while others shared their activities concerning Palestine, including disseminating information on human rights violations by Israeli authorities. While a participant lamented that General Assembly resolution 194 (III), on the right of return of Palestine refugees, had not been implemented, it was noted that, like all other final status issues, a final arrangement allowing Palestinians to settle on portions of land would have to be the result of negotiations. When a participant shared the news that Portugal had just broken its contract with the Israeli water company Mekorot, a call was launched for the boycotting of companies involved in the occupation, such as Mekorot, Caterpillar, G4S and Alstom. Participants said that such an action would represent a concrete outcome of the Meeting in Quito. Finally, participants wished to create a network and to continue to exchange information on their respective activities and initiatives.

Annex I

Summary of the Chair

1. The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, hosted by Ecuador and organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, examined the support provided by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and the role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict.

2. Representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, including various United Nations bodies, and civil society, together with expert speakers from Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Peru, the United States of America, Uruguay and the State of Palestine shared their expertise at the Meeting.

3. In the opening session, Leonardo Arizaga, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, representing the host Government, expressed his country’s support for the Palestinian people and for solidarity activities carried out in the framework of the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He stressed that Ecuador, like Brazil, had been one of the first in Latin America, in 2010, to recognize the Palestinian State within the 1967 borders. The opening of the Palestinian Embassy in Ecuador in January 2014 and the planned opening of an Ecuadorian Embassy in Palestine in the next few weeks would strengthen the ties between the two peoples. The question of Palestine was of constant concern for Ecuador, especially when Israel stepped up actions that contributed to mistrust and undermined the current renewed round of negotiations. Recalling that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 68/12 of 26 November 2013, had proclaimed 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Vice-Minister said that Ecuador hoped that Palestine would soon be admitted as a full member of the United Nations, and reiterated its unconditional support for the cause of Palestine, which must result in the exercise of its inalienable right to self-determination and freedom, in an independent Palestinian State.

4. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his message to the Meeting, stressed that the United Nations remained committed to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine resulting in the two-State solution. The current renewed round of peace negotiations presented a rare and important opening to advance the two-State solution. He called on both parties to act to reach an agreement, even if it required painful concessions. He said he was encouraged by the commitment of Arab leaders to uphold the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. He remained deeply troubled by Israel’s rapidly expanding settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Increasing incidents at the Temple Mount/Haram Al Sharif were deeply troubling, as they could be perceived as serious acts of incitement in the wider region. The Secretary-General expressed concern about the recent escalation of violence between Gaza and Israel and the unacceptable firing of rockets into civilian areas. He called for maximum restraint on all sides to allow the implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). In conclusion, the Secretary-General expressed his hope that the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would create an environment favourable for fulfilling the collective responsibility towards the Palestinians.

5. The Chair of the Committee expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be back in the Latin American and Caribbean region after the meeting held in Montevideo in 2011. Recalling the wave of announcements of recognition of the State of Palestine by Latin American countries which had started in December 2010, he underscored that Latin America was a region where Palestinian and Jewish diasporas coexisted peacefully. The Chair drew attention to the fact that settlement construction in 2013 had more than doubled compared with 2012, and that a week before this Meeting, the Israeli Defence Ministry had announced it would proceed with plans to build 2,269 new homes in settlements in the West Bank. He reiterated that settlements were a clear violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and recalled the wave of announcements by European banks and pension funds severing ties with Israeli companies involved in illegal settlements. Speaking of the November 2013 proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly of 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he pointed out that the objective was to raise international awareness of the main issues relating to the question of Palestine and to promote peace. The Committee counted on the support of the Governments and peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean in undertaking various initiatives of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

6. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, representing President Mahmoud Abbas, thanked the people of Ecuador and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their continued efforts in support of the Palestinian cause. He said this was a critical moment in the struggle of the Palestinian people, since the ongoing round of negotiations was stalled despite the fact that the Palestinian side had acted in good faith and upheld its commitments. He pointed out that the change in its legal status by General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012 also entitled Palestine to gain access to international legal instruments and join United Nations bodies. He stressed that Israel continued its illegal actions, resulting in a 123 per cent increase in settlement construction in 2013 compared with the year before. He called for Israel to negotiate in good faith, to be willing to cross the bridge and to desist in its occupation. The international community, including Latin America and the Caribbean, had a collective responsibility to take the political, diplomatic and legal steps necessary to hold Israel accountable for its actions.

7. In his keynote presentation, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs pointed out that Palestinian and Israeli interests were not mutually exclusive; indeed, they were interdependent. Neither side would fully benefit from the peace, security and self-determination it deserved if the other side did not do so as well. He said that the parties were now at a moment of truth; a solution to the conflict was in reach and had to be seized. The status quo was not only unsustainable, but was continually deteriorating. The fragile security situation on the ground underscored the urgency of finding a solution to the conflict. He said that the sanctity of the holy sites of all faiths must be fully respected and that incitement and provocation from any quarter must cease. Drawing attention to the increasingly worrisome security and humanitarian situation in Gaza, he stressed that the only way to sustainably solve the Gaza predicament was to reintegrate it into one Palestinian polity in the context of serious progress towards the two-State solution. In conclusion, he reiterated that in this Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the United Nations hoped to witness the success of direct negotiations that would bring about a comprehensive settlement based on a two-State solution. Such a peace would provide the Palestinian people with the opportunity to be free and live in dignity, which they so rightfully deserved.

8. A number of representatives of Governments and intergovernmental organizations expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people, support for the ongoing renewed round of peace negotiations spearheaded by the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, the hope for the creation of the Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the need for Israel to abide by international law.

9. The participants then reviewed the obstacles and opportunities with respect to advancing peace between Israelis and Palestinians; the support provided by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine; and the role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict.

10. It was recalled that a solid majority of both Israelis and Palestinians had expressed a preference for a two-State solution to the conflict in virtually every poll and survey conducted over more than the past two decades. Despite the enormous frustration resulting from a lack of peace, these majorities remained committed to this goal. The League of Arab States, through its Arab Peace Initiative, had unanimously expressed the Arab consensus in favour of this as well. It was pointed out that, with the exception of a few outliers internationally and in any given society, the whole world essentially agreed on both the two-State solution and its fundamental outlines: a Palestinian State alongside Israel based on the 1967 borders, with mutually agreed land swaps and its capital in East Jerusalem; a fair and just resolution of the refugee issue; full regional acceptance and recognition of Israel and its integration into the Middle Eastern family of nations; and guarantees for Israel's security.

11. A number of participants believed that the first, and perhaps most far-reaching, of the obstacles to peace was the fundamental lack of trust confronting political leaders on both sides. The agreed-upon final status issues themselves presented another serious set of challenges to advancing peace, because, despite the significant progress in bridging the gaps over the past quarter-century, the distance between the parties on these specific issues – borders, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, water and security – remained real and substantive. Participants agreed that there were difficult choices to be made, but the prevailing political conditions rendered them far more difficult. Finally, participants also brought up the issue of regional dynamics, which had also proved to be an impediment, given the repeated interference in Israeli-Palestinian dynamics and internal Palestinian politics by various regional actors, some of whom were not committed to a two-State solution. Added to this was the ongoing period of protracted instability and change in the Middle East and North Africa, owing to which the Israeli-Palestinian issue had receded as an immediate priority for much of the international community.

12. Nevertheless, participants were unanimous in the belief that the prospect for a real and positive engagement by significant regional players in the Israeli-Palestinian political process was foreseeable, and that the international community as a whole should continue to develop and intensify efforts to disincentivize Israel from carrying out any further illegal activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

13. A participant representing the World Food Programme drew attention to the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza resulting from Israeli policies and practices. A total of 1.57 million people in Palestine were food-insecure (19 per cent of the population of the West Bank and 57 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip). Forty-five per cent of Palestinians (2 million people) had restricted access to primary health care, 28 per cent (1.25 million) were unemployed, and 22 per cent (0.98 million people) received less than 60 litres of water per day. He stressed that there had been a 25 per cent increase in home demolitions and that there were 12,000 outstanding demolition orders. Humanitarian needs in Palestine were a result of severe restrictions imposed by Israel on livelihoods and economic activity, he said, calling on Israel to stop its illegal policies and practices.

14. Assessing the viability of the two-State solution, a speaker representing Israel's largest peace movement, Peace Now, first gave an overview of Israeli settlement activity from 1977 to 2013, and then outlined the major threats to the two-State solution, such as construction in the "Ariel" and "Efrat" settlements, and in El (planned). Relying on the results of a poll conducted by the University of Maryland in December 2013, he illustrated the support of both the Israeli and Palestinian public for a peace agreement. He pointed out that in the current Knesset, 72 members were in favor of a peace deal, 41 were against, and 7 abstained. He called on Prime Minister Netanyahu to use this majority support of the Israeli public and of the majority of the Knesset to make a peace agreement. He stressed that only 1.8 per cent of the total Israeli population would be affected by an evacuation (according to the Geneva Initiative), and believed that the Israeli public should be told more often about the benefits that a peace agreement would bring to Israel's economic and diplomatic standing internationally.

15. With respect to the role of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the peaceful resolution of the conflict, participants astutely observed that, through its Arab and Jewish diasporas, Latin America was linked to Israel and Palestine by strong ties - cultural, ethnic, economic, religious, political and moral. Participants thanked all Latin American and Caribbean countries that had recognized the State of Palestine, and called on countries that had not yet done so to do so. It was stressed that Latin America and the Caribbean were against the occupation and its dire consequences, but not against Israel and its people, and that this should be clear. Participants praised the fact that, among the Latin American countries, Brazil had been exemplary in its solidarity with the Palestinian people and had played an important role since the very beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, reflecting on the complexity of the relationship between Brazil and the Middle East region, a participant raised the question of Brazil's arms trade deals with Israel, which had made the country Israel's largest trade partner in Latin America and the second-largest in the world.

16. Another discussion ensued, on whether the Arab and Jewish diasporas in Latin America were part of the problem or part of the solution. It was observed that the diasporas maintained a sustained concern about the situation in their countries of origin, and that sometimes, instead of "exporting" their good experience of coexistence to the Middle East, they were perceived of as "importing" conflict to Latin America, by virtue of a so-called "long-distance nationalism". However, by and large, there was a tradition of coexistence between the Arab and Jewish diasporas in Latin America through shared neighborhoods, clubs, banks and joint businesses. Jews and Palestinians who had lived in Latin America created mechanisms for peaceful coexistence and were an example of the possibility of such coexistence. Moreover, members of the Jewish and Arab communities had established chapters of the Consensus for Palestinian-Israeli Peace in Latin America, an

initiative that sought to mobilize the Arab and Jewish diasporas in Latin America to address the conflict through dialogue and the creation of learning opportunities within and between the Arab and Jewish communities of Latin America to promote recognition of a common Abrahamic origin. A representative of the organization briefed the participants on the results of cooperation between the two diasporas in Latin America.

17. Recognizing the importance of civil society and academia in the promotion of a peaceful settlement of the conflict, the participants reviewed concrete civil society activities and academic initiatives and events geared towards a better understanding of the origins and complexity of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict among the general public and university students in Latin America. A number of important academic collaborations between universities and colleges in Latin America, the United States and Palestine were highlighted, which were aimed at promoting dialogue between Jewish and Arab youth. Participants were unanimous in acknowledging the importance of education in seeking to change the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and expressed regret that, far too often, Palestinians were portrayed as militants who threatened the State of Israel, while no context was given in regard to the decades-long occupation and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people.

18. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations expressed his appreciation for the dedicated role that Latin American countries in general, and Ecuador in particular, had played in promoting the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He was impressed by the level of awareness and engagement of Latin American civil society and academia in advancing the cause of the Palestinian people. He said that more needed to be done if these joint efforts were to be effective in persuading Israel to discontinue its illegal policies and the occupation as a whole, and referred to the European Union trade and funding guidelines, and to the recent steps taken by some Western banks and pension funds, all in response to Israeli illegal settlement activity.

19. During the closing session, the representative of Ecuador said that the hosting of this important Meeting in the country's capital, Quito, was evidence of the commitment of the Government of Ecuador to a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. Ecuador had placed itself in the forefront of solidarity with the Palestinian people by supporting their cause of creating an independent State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital in the contexts of the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, and by supporting the mandate and work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Ecuador intended to continue such support in the future and suggested hosting a meeting of young Israelis and Palestinians with the aim of promoting their mutual understanding and knowledge of the coexistence of the Arab and Jewish diasporas in Latin America.

20. The Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Ecuador reminded participants that the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, with the support of the Palestinian people, was resolute in not compromising on a single square metre of Palestinian land. An independent Palestinian State must be created on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the adoption of United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19 was the first step in that direction. The current status quo was unacceptable, he stressed, recalling General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and the Arab Peace Initiative as among the existing tools for advancing the Palestinian cause. He called on the Government of Israel to live up to the principles of the democratic and non-discriminatory State that Israel claimed to be. Peace was justice, he said, not the settlements, the wall and the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. In conclusion, he thanked the Government and the people of Ecuador for their hospitality and their unwavering support for the Palestinian people, and expressed hope for further fruitful cooperation between the two States.

21. The Chair of the Committee expressed his gratitude to the representative of Ecuador for outlining concrete commitments and offering personal support in the organization of regional initiatives in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Latin America. The Chair also noted Ecuador's support for the convening by the Committee, later in 2014, of an international meeting of parliamentarians in New York in support of the Palestinian people. Summing up the results of discussions during the Meeting, the Chair welcomed the multitude of ideas put forward by participants for the 2014 International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He also reiterated his appreciation for the concrete actions taken, such as the measures of some European banks to sever their ties with companies carrying out business activities in the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, or measures requiring the labelling of Israeli goods produced in settlements as such. The Chair concluded by calling for the cooperation and support of the intergovernmental, non-governmental and academic entities present at the Meeting to help end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Annex II

List of participants

Speakers

Ibrahim M. K. Alzeben
Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Brazil
Brasília
Omar Al Kaddour
Consenso Argentino por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
(Argentine Consensus for Palestinian Israeli Peace)
Buenos Aires
Diego Arria
Political Analyst
New York
Ziad Asali
President
American Task Force on Palestine
Washington, D.C.
Emad Burnat
Filmmaker
Ramallah
Arlene Elizabeth Clemesha
Professor of Arab History
Centre for Arab Studies
University of São Paulo
São Paulo
Juan Raúl Ferreira
President
Uruguay-Israel Cultural Institute
Montevideo
Edward (Edy) Kaufman
Senior Research Scholar
Department of Government and Politics
Centre for International Development and Conflict Management
University of Maryland, College Park
Adriana Mabilia
Journalist
Brasília

Yaniv Shacham
Campaigns and New Media manager
Peace Now
Tel Aviv
Mariela Volcovich
Consenso Argentino por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
(Argentine Consensus for Palestinian Israeli Peace)
Buenos Aires

Resource persons

Pedro Ferraracio Charbel
Member
University of São Paulo
Palestinian Front and the Front in Defense of the Palestinian People
São Paulo
Rafael Guendelman Hales
Videographer
Consenso Chileno por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
Santiago
Leonel Groisman
Consenso Uruguayo por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
Montevideo
Maia Guiskin
Anthropologist
Universidad de Chile
Consenso Chileno por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
Santiago
Abder Rahim Jbara Husein
Consenso Uruguayo por la Paz Palestino-Israeli
Montevideo

Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Abdou Salam Diallo
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chair of the Committee
Zahir Tanin
Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Vice-Chair of the Committee
Christopher Grima
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee
Riyad Mansour
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations
Sidhartha Marin
Ambassador of Nicaragua to Ecuador, representing
H.E. Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Vice-Chair of the Committee

Representative of the Secretary-General

Oscar Fernandez-Taranco
Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Governments

Argentina

Esteban de Anchonera
Secretary
Embassy of Argentina in Ecuador

Brazil

Fernando Simas Magalhães
Ambassador to Ecuador
Renato Domith Godinho
Head of Political Department
Embassy of Brazil in Ecuador

Canada

Gabriel Frappier
Political Attaché
Embassy of Canada in Ecuador

Chile

Juan Pablo Lira
Ambassador to Ecuador
Felipe Aravena

Cuba

Jorge Rodríguez Hernández
Ambassador to Ecuador
José Julián Calasague
Minister of Consular Affairs

Dominican Republic

Victor Reynaldo Lora Díaz
Ambassador to Ecuador

Ecuador

Leonardo Arízaga
Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility
Diego Morejón
Ambassador

Under Secretary of International Organizations

Diego Stacey Moreno

Ambassador

Director of Asia and Oceania

Walter Schuldt Espinel

Director of Environment and Climate, Change Affairs

Helena Yáñez

Minister and Director of the United Nations System

Alexandra Haro

Minister, Directorate of the United Nations System

José Eduardo Proaño

First Secretary

Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the

United Nations

New York

Egypt

Hacem Zaki

Chargé d'affaires

Embassy of Egypt in Ecuador

El Salvador

Luis Alberto Cisneros Córdova

Ambassador to Ecuador

Carlos Brizuela

Counsellor

Guatemala

Rebeca Monzón Rojao

Ambassador to Ecuador

Cindy Paz

Counsellor

Indonesia

Herman Djatmiko

Minister Counsellor

Robby Schirul

Third Secretary

Rafael Alex Ortiz Alarcón

Translator

Embassy of Indonesia in Ecuador

Italy

Gianni Piccato

Ambassador to Ecuador

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Ahmad Pabarja

Ambassador to Ecuador

Ahmad Farajpour Sharifabad

Encargado de Asuntos Económicos y Comerciales

Maziar Raja

Mohammadhossein Ghazaei

Japan

Yumi Katsuta

Third Secretary

Embassy of Japan in Ecuador

Kuwait

Bader Nasser Al Saqer

Third Secretary

Embassy of Kuwait in Chile

Lebanon

Assaad Zard

Consul of Lebanon in Quito

Wissam Maksoud

Assistant

Malaysia

Ganeson Sivagurunathan,

Ambassador to Chile

Mauritania

Jiddou Ould Abderrahman

Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

Permanent Mission of Mauritania to the United Nations

New York

Mexico

Jaime del Arena

Ambassador to Ecuador

Nicaragua

Sidhartha Marin

Ambassador to Ecuador

Franklin Duarte Palma

First Secretary

Paraguay

María José Argaña

Ambassador to Ecuador

Haydee Aquino

First Secretary

Peru

Elmo Vargas Chacón
Second Secretary
Embassy of Peru in Ecuador

Russian Federation

Yan Burlaiy
Ambassador to Ecuador
Alexander Mironov
Counsellor
Sergey Chirkin
Counsellor
Evgeny Belsky
Second Secretary
Olga Romovskaya
Attaché
Daria Kopylova
Attaché

Spain

Luis Francisco García Lumbreras
First Secretary
Embassy of Spain in Ecuador

Turkey

Korkut Güngen
Ambassador to Ecuador
Ylknor Bademli Angel
Counsellor

Ukraine

Francisco Lasso de la Torre,
Honorary Consul of Ukraine to Ecuador
Honorary Consulate of Ukraine in Guayaquil

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

María Lourdes Urbaneja Durant
Ambassador to Ecuador
Oscar Upegui
Minister Counsellor

**Non-member States having received a standing invitation to participate as observers
in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining
permanent observer missions at Headquarters**

State of Palestine

Hani A. Remawi
Ambassador to Ecuador

Intergovernmental organizations**International Organization for Migration**

Manuel Hoff, Programme Officer

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies**United Nations Development Programme**

Diego Zorrilla
United Nations Resident Coordinator

UN-Habitat

Mónica Quintana Molina
Programme Manager

United Nations Volunteers

Piera Zuccherin
Coordinator

World Food Programme

Pablo Recalde
WFP Representative and Country Director,
West Bank and Gaza (oPt)
Natalina Cremonesi

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President
Naila Asali
Board Member

Asociación Americana de Juristas (American Association of Jurists)

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Secretary General
Jorge Alpino Acosta Cisneros
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Advisory Board and the Ecuador Chapter
Sandra Isabel Correa León
Member

Advisory Board and the Ecuador Chapter

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Adnan Sayan

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George Jaraiseh

Committee member

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(Argentine Consensus for Palestinian Israeli Peace)

Omar Al Kaddour

Mariela Volcovich

Consenso Chileno por la Paz Palestino-Israeli

Rafael Guendelman Hales

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Santiago

Consenso Uruguayo por la Paz Palestino-Israeli

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Rosalvo Salgueiro

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Carlos Alberto da Silva Noya

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UN Welfare Organization

María Eugenia Morales

Uruguay-Israel Cultural Institute

Juan Raúl Ferreira, President

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Coordinador Regional

Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos

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Professor

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador

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Professor

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Diego Donoso

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Agencia EFE

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(referred by the Director of the Institute of International Studies of the Central University of Ecuador)

Abdullah Qasem A. Ahmed Al Sharabi

media and human rights activist, representing the Federal Organization of Democracy Development for Foreign Affairs-Yemen

María del Pilar Azanza

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María Mercedes Salgado
university professor
