



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

**SPECIAL BULLETIN ON
THE COMMEMORATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY
WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE
2013**

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I. COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 29 November 2013, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, as well as in several other cities, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

All States Members of the United Nations, observers, intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies were invited to attend the special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

At the meeting, statements were made by Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal), Chair of the Committee; John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly; Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, who read a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon; and Liu Jieyi (China), President of the Security Council for the month of November 2013. The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, read out a message on behalf of Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In addition, Palitha T.B. Kohona (Sri Lanka) made a statement in his capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

In addition, Mohammad Khazaei, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, delivered a message from Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Kadra Ahmed Hassan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Djibouti to the United Nations, read out a message from Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti, in his capacity as Chair of the thirty-ninth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, read out a message from Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union; and Ahmed Fathalla, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, delivered a message from Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. David Wildman, Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice with the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries, also addressed the meeting on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

Closing remarks were made by Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People received messages from 28 Heads of State, 5 Heads of Government, 7 Governments and 10 Ministers for Foreign Affairs, as well as from the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Messages were received from six non-governmental organizations.

The special meeting was followed by the showing of a film entitled *State 194*, directed by Dan Setton and produced by Elise Pearlstein.

A cultural event, a concert featuring two Palestinian singers, Nai Barghouti and Mohammed Assaf, Regional Youth Ambassador of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and winner of the 2013 edition of the television show *Arab Idol*, was presented under the auspices of the Committee in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and UNRWA.

At the United Nations Office at Geneva, a special meeting was held on 29 November 2013. Michael Møller, Acting Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, chaired the meeting and read out a message from the Secretary-General. Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva, spoke on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Statements were also made by Ravinatha Pandukabhaya Aryasinha, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office at Geneva, who read a message from the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; Mohamed Khamlich, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States; Slimane Chikh, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; Mohsen Naziri Asl, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who read a statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Permanent Observer of the African Union; and Marcia Banasko, reading a statement on behalf of the following non-governmental organizations: World Young Women's Christian Association, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and General Arab Women Federation. Ibrahim Khraishi, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, read a statement on behalf of Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

At the United Nations Office at Vienna, a special meeting was held on 29 November 2013. It was chaired by Keith Azzopardi, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations Office at Vienna, who spoke on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Mazlan Othman, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, delivered a message from the Secretary-General. Ulrike Tilly, Head of the Department of the Middle East in the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs of Austria, read a message on behalf of the host country and Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations (Vienna) presented the Statement of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Badr Mohammed Zaher Al-Hinai, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations (Vienna) delivered a statement on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Vienna. Other speakers included Reza Najafi, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Dato' Selwyn Das, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Representatives of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations (Vienna) of Qatar and Kuwait and Juan Carlos Marsan Aguilera, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations (Vienna), who delivered national statements. Fritz Edlinger, Secretary-General of the Society for Austro-Arab Relations, spoke on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine. Salahaldin Abdalshafi, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, read a statement from Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

II. TEXTS OF STATEMENTS MADE AND MESSAGES DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 2013

Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

[Original: French]

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to extend my satisfaction and gratitude to delegations for their presence among us today, on the occasion of the commemoration of this important event, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. Each year it offers us the happy opportunity not only to renew our fraternal solidarity with the Palestinian people and to review what has been done, but also to look towards the future with regard to what we wish to build for Palestine.

This day also allows us to engage in what we hope will be a fruitful reflection and to exchange views on the various measures that might be adopted by the international community, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Quartet, the Secretariat, the United Nations bodies on the ground, Member States and civil society in order to realize the vision of a free, independent and prosperous Palestinian State living in peace with Israel.

The entire world still recalls the historic day of 29 November 2012 when, in the presence of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, the General Assembly recognized Palestine's statehood status through resolution 67/19. Sixty-six years after the United Nations promise to give Palestine the status of an independent State, we can agree that this recognition seems to be the fulfilment of an internationally agreed requirement and the correction of an anomaly.

It is time for Palestinian children to no longer be persecuted and be able to breathe the fresh air of freedom, instead of the asphyxiating odours of tear gas. Their right to life must benefit from the greatest protection without being dependent upon the moods of anonymous soldiers. Their parents should be able to fulfil their needs without having to wonder if their homes will still be standing tomorrow. Palestinian farmers should be able to go peacefully to their olive groves and without the risk of seeing their fields destroyed and burned by uncontrolled settlers.

It is time for the people of Gaza to see their peers in the West Bank, from whom they have been unfairly separated by the blockade. As with the faithful of all revealed religions, the Palestinians should also enjoy their freedom of religion without constraint and be able to freely travel to the holy places of Jerusalem. Palestinian refugees should leave the overcrowded camps to permanently return to their homes.

Today, let us all pledge to resolutely work together towards welcoming, in the near future, the President of Palestine, as a fully sovereign Head of State, and a full member of the United Nations family. Let us work together to seize what appears to be one of the last chances to reach a negotiated solution on the coexistence of two States — Palestinian and Israeli. Indeed, time is running out. The negotiation process is dangerously threatened by certain policies, including the continuation of the establishment of settlements.

In that connection, I welcome the concrete and sound steps taken by the European Union to tighten its regulations, especially with regard to products coming from Jewish settlements. All Governments and international organizations should base their actions on and follow that example.

Similarly, we should provide support and assistance to the Palestinian Government to enable it to meet its obligations in the difficult situation that it is experiencing. We must also help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to effectively continue the work it has been doing for many decades. Finally, we must encourage Palestinians to overcome their differences in order to facilitate lasting peace.

In order to respond more effectively to the growing burden of the volume of our Committee's work, our Bureau has welcomed new members. At the same time, our Working Group to raise the awareness of civil society has resumed its activities.

Today we officially inaugurate the United Nations Platform for Palestine, which is an online tool for coordinating the work of our Committee with that of non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, through draft resolutions A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14 and A/68/L.15, which I will submit this afternoon to the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled the "Question of Palestine", we will ask, *inter alia*, that 2014 be declared the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I urge the delegations of the Committee to show their solidarity by voting in favour of the four draft resolutions. The success of the International Year will depend on the mobilization of Governments, civil society and the whole United Nations system.

The Committee will continue to make every effort necessary to effectively fulfil the mandate that the General Assembly has entrusted to it until all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people have been fully realized. Our commitment and mobilization remain in favour of a permanent, just and lasting settlement of the conflict, based on a two-State solution, enabling Israel and Palestine to live in peace and security.

**John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), President
of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly**

[Original: English]

I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the invitation to address this year's special meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This important Day of Solidarity has been observed annually since 1978, following a decision taken by the General Assembly the previous year.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the Committee for its dedicated work towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and for promoting international solidarity with the people of Palestine in their legitimate aspirations for independence and sovereignty.

This year's observation takes place while the renewed round of the Middle East peace negotiations is under way. We all hope that the ongoing talks will lead to an understanding on all six permanent status issues, and to reaching a just and lasting settlement to the conflict. In that context, I reiterate our appreciation for the ongoing diplomatic efforts that are being complemented by a comprehensive Palestinian economic revival plan.

Following its decision last year to admit the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State, the General Assembly welcomed the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, as a Head of State for his address to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly during September's general debate segment (see A/68/PV.12). Prior to that, in August of this year, the State of Palestine welcomed the Secretary-General as a State guest when he visited Palestine for the first time after the recognition by the General Assembly. In his presence, a country agreement was signed between the United Nations and the State of Palestine.

Another positive development that took place soon after the resumption of negotiations was the agreement to release 104 Palestinian prisoners who were held in Israeli prisons for more than 20 years. That decision had been repeatedly called for by the General Assembly.

I am also encouraged by the recent commitment of Arab leaders to renew the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which holds the promise for regional stability and which can indeed become an important part of current peace efforts.

I call on Governments and the peoples of both Israel and Palestine to avoid actions that would undermine the fragile hope created by the renewed round of negotiations and to cease and desist from any actions that are in contravention of international law or that would pose a major impediment to peace in the Middle East and, more importantly, render the two-State solution impossible. In that context, I specifically refer to the issues of settlements and annexation.

Ongoing peace negotiations must be given a chance for peace to take root and flourish, but peace cannot be meaningful and durable without taking fully into account the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which are key to the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. As President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, I would like to reiterate that the Assembly remains committed to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, resulting in a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized pre-1967 borders.

It remains the General Assembly's resolute position that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international law. In that context, the International Day of Solidarity continues to serve the important purpose of reminding the Member States of that collective international responsibility towards the Palestinian people and their free and prosperous future. I urge Member States to maintain and enhance their support and awareness-raising campaigns for the observance of the Day of Solidarity and for the peaceful resolution of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In that regard, I welcome the initiative of the Committee to request the General Assembly to proclaim the year 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let us use that important initiative to redouble our efforts to create an environment conducive to the successful outcome of the ongoing peace talks. I call upon all Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations to make 2014 the decisive year for achieving peace between Israel and Palestine.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations:
message delivered by Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General
of the United Nations

[Original: English]

This annual Day of Solidarity is an opportunity to reflect on the critical situation faced by the Palestinian people and consider our collective contributions and responsibilities as Governments, international or civil society organizations towards Israeli-Palestinian peace. I appreciate the efforts of the Committee to keep the international community's attention and focus on the question of Palestine.

This year's observance takes place as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators work together towards the agreed objective of a peaceful, comprehensive settlement on all permanent status issues. I call on all members of the international community to support the parties in that ambitious endeavour to fulfil the two-State objective, bringing about an end to the conflict. All parties must act in a responsible way and refrain from actions that undermine the prospects for successful negotiations.

I am alarmed by the increasingly dangerous situation on the ground. There has been an escalation of violence and incitement. Although I welcome Israel's release of prisoners as part of the agreement to renew talks, its settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory continues and remains a cause for very grave concern. Announcements of thousands of new housing units cannot be reconciled with the goal of a two-State solution and risks the collapse of negotiations. Settlements are in violation of international law and constitute obstacles to peace. All settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem must cease. Measures that prejudice final status issues are not to be recognized.

Meanwhile, Palestinians continue to be displaced through house demolitions in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Of particular concern are developments in East Jerusalem, where this year alone some one hundred structures have been demolished, displacing 300 people. Hundreds more Palestinians are at risk because their homes were built without Israeli-issued building permits. That underscores the importance of Palestinian access to a fair planning and zoning regime. I remind Israel of its obligation to protect the population under occupation.

The situation in Gaza remains a source of serious concern. I reiterate my condemnation of all rocket fire into Israel and of the construction of tunnels into Israel by militants. Following the recent tunnel discovery, Israel suspended the transfer of construction material into Gaza, including for humanitarian projects. While I recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, I urge Israel to ensure that the needs of the civilian population in Gaza are met.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a lifeline for millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and the region, continues to face serious financial difficulties. I call on all donors, including new ones, to make or increase contributions to sustain UNRWA's vital and indispensable operations. Palestinian unity based on the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the positions of the Arab Peace Initiative is essential for the two-State solution. I urge the Palestinians to overcome their divisions without delay in the interest of unity. The goal remains clear — an end to the occupation that started in 1967 and the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable State of

Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, living side by side in peace with a secure State of Israel. Jerusalem is to emerge from negotiations as the capital of two States, with arrangements as to the holy sites that are acceptable to all. An agreed solution must be found for millions of Palestinian refugees around the region.

This past September marked the twentieth anniversary of the Oslo accords. After two decades of talks and far too many adverse developments on the ground, I urge Palestinian and Israeli leaders to take the decisions that will usher in a political solution to the serious and long-standing conflict. The United Nations, through its engagement with all relevant partners, including within the Quartet, stands ready to contribute to that process and to the two-State solution. We cannot afford to lose the current moment of opportunity. I ask everyone in the international community to work together to translate the solidarity expressed here today into positive action for peace and justice.

Let me end on a personal, human note. During my visit last week to the Arab-Africa summit in Kuwait, I met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Mr. Riad Malki, who told me about his son. His son had grown up in the West Bank and left to study abroad, in Manchester in the United Kingdom. The son sent his father, the Foreign Minister, an e-mail expressing his great joy, relief and astonishment in not having to identify himself on the streets of Manchester, that he encountered no road blocks, that he felt like a free young man.

The Foreign Minister, who agreed that I could mention this to the Committee today, hoped that his son would eventually return to work for peace and for a solution to this far too longstanding conflict. He hoped that we should all recall that when we talk about this situation, in the end it is all about human beings — the human beings who are affected and the human beings who should be put in the centre. I would say that goes for both Palestinians and Israelis.

**Liu Jieyi (China), President of
the Security Council for the month of November 2013**

[Original: English]

I would like to begin by thanking the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November.

The Security Council has always paid close attention to the question of Palestine. It has supported all efforts to seek its comprehensive settlement through dialogue and negotiation, on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map for peace in the Middle East, and the Arab Peace Initiative, so as to realize the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace, and to achieve a comprehensive, lasting peace in the Middle East.

The question of Palestine is the crux of the Middle East issue and has therefore remained high on the Council's agenda. In order to achieve a comprehensive solution, the parties should stay on a course that can lead to independent Palestinian statehood and peaceful coexistence for the two States of Palestine and Israel. Negotiation should be the only way to achieve that peace. The principle of land for peace should be firmly upheld, and the international community should provide significant guarantees in order to enable the peace process to move forward. Last year saw Palestine obtain the status of a non-member observer State in the United Nations. At the same time, however,

Palestine and Israel still have major differences on a series of key issues. Many difficulties and challenges must be resolved before a two-State solution can be achieved through peace talks.

Throughout the past year, the Council has actively supported the parties' various efforts to reach a resumption of talks between the Palestinians and Israel. It has continued to receive monthly briefings on the situation from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East and from the Department of Political Affairs, and it has held regular open debates on the Middle East. Council members commended the Palestinian and Israeli leaders for their enormous political courage and efforts to move the peace process forward. They welcomed the resumption of direct talks between Palestine and Israel in July, and expressed the hope that both sides would take the opportunity to meet each other half way and achieve substantive progress in the talks.

Over the course of the year, Council members have expressed concern about Israel's continuing construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, in the belief that such actions undermine peace efforts and the viability of a two-State solution. They have stressed the importance of complete fulfilment of obligations under relevant international law. Any unilateral action, including the construction of settlements, will not be recognized by the international community and cannot prejudice the outcome of peace talks. The Council members have expressed their concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Gaza. They have reiterated their calls for the full implementation of Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), and stressed the importance of lifting the Gaza blockade completely, ensuring the flow of goods and people into Gaza and allowing the unimpeded distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. They have commended the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its enormous and effective work to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian refugees, and expressed the hope that the international community would continue to increase its support for UNRWA.

The sustained and steady development of the Palestinian economy is crucial to realizing independent Palestinian statehood and regional stability. Council members call on the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to Palestine, provide more support for developing the Palestinian economy and have greater confidence in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

The Security Council attaches great importance to the Quartet's efforts to advance the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. It welcomed the Quartet's ministerial meeting in September and its issuance of a statement, and expressed the hope that the Quartet will continue to play its important role. It commends the unrelenting efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to work towards realizing the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, and it supports the convening of international conferences in various countries, including the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in June in Beijing, aimed at bringing the international community together and maintaining positive momentum for the peace talks.

The Security Council will pursue its efforts to facilitate a just and equitable solution to the question of Palestine and to faithfully shoulder its responsibilities as outlined in the relevant Security Council resolutions. It will remain committed to achieving the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and comprehensive, lasting peace and stability in the Middle East, on the basis of the peaceful coexistence of the two States of Palestine and Israel.

**Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief
and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

[Original: English]

On behalf of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations body responsible for assisting 5 million Palestinian refugees, I would like to express my pleasure at the honour of being here today with you, Mr. Chair, the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine. I would also like to thank you, Sir, all the members of the Committee and all the speakers for being here today.

I will say only a few words, as much has already been said, before ceding the floor, as part of my slot, to Mr. Mohammed Assaf, whom I will introduce later.

Although solidarity is not a tangible value, it is crucial, and it is important that we continue to express that solidarity with the Palestinian people. Solidarity transcends political and financial support; while that support is still needed, solidarity is crucial to enabling Palestinians to feel that they are not alone in the many predicaments that have been described this morning.

From the perspective of the organization that I have the honour to lead, we are sadly familiar with that risk of loneliness and with the need for solidarity. We have dealt for more than 60 years throughout the region with Palestinian refugees whose 65 year exile, as has been mentioned, has not yet found the just solution it deserves. Solidarity with Palestinian refugees is especially important to them now as human beings, as was recalled by the Deputy-Secretary-General. This is a very difficult juncture in their history, as I mentioned here a few weeks ago in the Fourth Committee. We must not forget that more than half a million of those refugees are literally at risk of their lives today in Syria, and that more than 1 million Palestinian refugees, together with other Palestinians, continue to live under the blockade and to experience very severe hardship in Gaza.

Of course, a political solution is needed for the Palestinian refugees in Syria, just as it is needed for all other civilians, and the blockade must be lifted for Palestinian refugees and all other Palestinians in Gaza. But in the case of refugees taken comprehensively, I would like to stress that a just solution to their plight and, in particular, redress of the injustice that caused their original exile, are urgently required. We must hope that that will be addressed in the best possible manner in the current direct talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians in a way that is agreed and agreeable to all.

Meanwhile, as has already been addressed several times — and I am grateful to the speakers who have done so — UNWRA also needs financial support at a juncture that is close to desperate. As was recalled in the Security Council a few days ago, if fresh money is not contributed to our core programmes we will not be able to pay our staff of 30,000, either in whole or in part, for the month of December. It is important to support UNWRA because we provide relief to refugees who are under special hardship. We also provide opportunities through educational and other programmes to all refugees and especially to the young.

It is therefore fitting for me to cede the floor at this point to a young Palestinian refugee, Mohammed Assaf. He hails from the Khan Younis refugee camp, in Gaza. Just a few months ago, he won a very important musical competition, the Arab Idol, and was appointed the first ever regional ambassador for youth for UNWRA.

Mohammed Assaf, Regional ambassador for youth for UNRWA

[Original: Arabic]

I am greatly honoured to be here at United Nations Headquarters to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with my people, the people of Palestine. As a 24-year-old Palestinian refugee from Gaza, and the winner of the Arab Idol competition on MBC, it is also a source of great pride to me on this special day to be able to convey the voice of Palestinian youth from the occupied territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the diaspora. I speak today in my capacity as the regional youth ambassador for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the largest agency of the United Nations.

In my home town, Khan Younis in Gaza, we know and rely on UNRWA, whose job is to assist and protect 5 million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. UNRWA's work includes supporting the neediest Palestinian refugees, including women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. UNRWA is also working to improve and rehabilitate the 58 Palestinian refugee camps across the region, like Khan Younis, in which many of us still reside.

UNRWA also provides health care. It operates over 130 health centres in the region, which receive 10 million visits a year, including from pregnant women who need prenatal care, young children who need vaccines and checkups, and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes who need ongoing medical attention and care.

UNRWA also stands for education. Every day, nearly half a million children attend over 700 UNRWA schools. They learn to read, write, add and subtract but they also learn about the responsibility each of them has to work hard to reach his or her full potential. There will be over 1.5 million Palestinian refugee youth by 2020. In recognition of that fact, UNRWA has made a real and meaningful commitment to supporting us by providing vocational training and scholarships, promoting our health and minds, and helping young refugees by giving them limited loans to start new businesses and projects that can in turn generate more opportunities.

In Gaza, young people like me grow up in an incredibly challenging environment. Many of our parents struggle to find jobs or to put food on the table; continual power outages and fuel shortages make studying difficult. Then there is the violence, the isolation and the blockade. Sometimes it feels as if there is no escape. Gazans do not have real social or economic rights, such as the right to a decent standard of living, adequate housing, clean water, safety or dignity. That is why we count on UNRWA to be there each and every day to defend the rights of Palestinians to those basic human needs. That is all the more important in light of the deteriorating circumstances of Palestinian refugees in Gaza, and indeed throughout the region.

I faced many great difficulties in my journey outside Palestine in order to take part in Arab Idol, a programme that was followed by more than 120 million Arabs, which God helped me to accomplish and also to win. I would like to note the positive role of the television station MBC, which has stood by me before, during and after I secured my title, which not only made me popular but made it possible for me to be here today as regional youth ambassador. That is the best example of the constructive role that information and media can play in helping the youth of our region.

Just think of Syria, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees have been displaced, many for the second or third time. Tens of thousands have been forced to flee the country, seeking safety in Lebanon, Jordan or other countries. Since 2011, eight UNRWA staff members have lost

their lives as a result of the conflict in Syria. Many of them were teachers. A few days ago, UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi said that UNRWA contributes to the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian refugees every day in a very simple, practical and concrete manner, in the classrooms, clinics and homes of those too poor to stand alone and in the endeavours of those who are strong enough to build a better future. Palestinian refugees have witnessed great steadfastness on the part of UNRWA itself, too.

I would like to conclude by appealing to all the supporters of and donors to UNRWA present here today to guarantee that the Agency, which this year is facing a financial deficit of over \$30 million, be provided with enough money to maintain its services to the Palestinian refugees. If such funds are not provided in the coming weeks, UNRWA will not be able to pay the salaries of its staff in December. That is not acceptable. I appeal to participants to support UNRWA, just as UNRWA supported me and many other refugees by giving us the strength to work for a better future.

**Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the
Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization;
message read by Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of
the State of Palestine to the United Nations**

[Original: English]

I am delighted to see my good friend, the Foreign Minister of Brazil, and his representative among us, and to see Mr. Lewis, who is just walking across the room to join us on this very important occasion. I am also honoured that two Palestinians from a refugee background, my brother Mohammed Assaf and myself, are addressing the Committee today. One of us, Mohammed Assaf, is on a shining trajectory as a Palestinian who we are so proud of, demonstrating a wonderful dimension of the attributes of the Palestinian people, and the other, myself, Riyad Mansour, is the son of a Palestinian refugee family and is representing the State of Palestine. I am so proud to serve in that capacity and to be sharing the rostrum with Mohammed Assaf, the winner of Arab Idol. I hope all participants and many others will be in this same room tonight to enjoy his singing, since we will be celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People tonight in a very appropriate and delightful way. Mohammed Assaf has agreed, with another Palestinian performer, to entertain us tonight.

I am also honoured to read out to the Committee the statement of President Mahmoud Abbas addressed to the Committee.

[Original: Arabic]

“At the outset, I wish to convey to the Committee the greetings of the State of Palestine and the Palestinian people, and to all our friends participating in the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People around the world. We are commemorating this occasion one year after the adoption by the General Assembly, on 29 November 2012, of the historic resolution 67/19, raising the status of Palestine to that of a non-member observer State at the United Nations. Of course, our objective and endeavour remain full membership in the United Nations, which is our people’s legitimate and legal right.

“We underscore, in that regard, the call in resolution 181 (II), by which historic Palestine was partitioned, for consideration to be given to the application for membership in the United Nations by

either State. We recall further that Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949 was accompanied by two conditions: its commitment to the partition resolution 181 (II) and the establishment of the Palestinian State; and its commitment to resolution 194 (III), which was reaffirmed in the Arab Peace Initiative, with regard to reaching a just and agreed solution to the plight of Palestine refugees.

"On this day, we reiterate our deep gratitude to all Member States, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, our brothers, sisters, friends and freedom- and peace-loving peoples around the world who continue to stand steadfastly by our people. We are grateful for their solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people's legitimate national aspirations for the achievement of their freedom and independence and a just and lasting peace.

"Despite all the challenges, hardships and setbacks, we continue to have faith that a just peace can be achieved in our region and that right will prevail. Therefore, we appeal to participants to continue to stand firmly for peace, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the right to self-determination, which the Palestinian people have too long been denied. It is high time to find the political will to act decisively for the realization of the inalienable rights of our people, including the right to independence in their State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"Since its inception, the United Nations has defended our cause, keeping it a priority on the agenda of the international community, extended a helping hand to our people and adopted resolutions and recommendations that constitute a foundation that cannot be bypassed in the search for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution. The permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine must be upheld until the issue, in all its aspects, is satisfactorily resolved. In that regard, we express our deep appreciation for the efforts of His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chair, His Excellency Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo of Senegal, and other members of the Bureau, as well as all members and observers of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, aimed at promoting the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and at ensuring the achievement of a just and lasting peace.

"Today, we also reaffirm our gratitude for the strong and principled resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other organs and bodies of the United Nations, including the International Court of Justice, all of which have contributed to safeguarding the rights of our people over many decades. Those resolutions have addressed all facets of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, including, inter alia, the core issues of the Palestine refugees, the right to self-determination, the status of Jerusalem, the illegal Israeli settlement campaign, the unjust blockade against our people in the Gaza Strip and the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

"We regret the fact that the countless resolutions on the question of Palestine have not been implemented, which has clearly compounded the conflict over many decades, inflicting grave hardships on the Palestinian people and the continued denial of their rights. That regrettable reality confirms the widespread conviction that there is, indeed, a double standard when it comes to United Nations resolutions regarding Israel that are not implemented, allowing it to continue behaving as if it were a State above the law.

"This year marks the passage of 46 years since the June 1967 war, when Israel forcibly occupied the remaining territory of historical Palestine: the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. We stress that this unjust situation and the military occupation of our land and our people must end. We reiterate our urgent calls on the international community to act forthwith to

compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with its legal obligations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and its international commitments and to cease its violations of international law and its illegal, aggressive and destructive policies and practices.

“The insidious Israeli settlement campaign and the confiscation of Palestinian lands in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the capital of our State, must be completely halted. The demolition of Palestinian homes and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and properties must stop. The construction of the apartheid annexation wall must cease. The Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails must be released. The unjust and inhumane blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip must be lifted. The illegal actions and measures to Judaize East Jerusalem and alter or erase the Christian and Muslim Palestinian presence and identity in the Holy City must come to an end. All acts of violence and terrorism perpetrated by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian civilian population must stop.

“The State of Palestine continues to act with the utmost responsibility to serve its people and to uphold its legal obligations and international commitments. It has consistently acted in good faith for the sake of peace, repeatedly reaffirming its adherence to the long-standing parameters of the peace process, which are embodied in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, and to the two-State solution for the realization of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

“For decades, we have expressed our readiness to reach a solution to the conflict with Israel that conforms with international resolutions and initiatives through the establishment of our Palestinian State on only 22 per cent of the territory of historical Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to reach a just and agreed solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (III).

“We reaffirm those commitments and that readiness once again today. Despite diminishing hopes and the critical situation on the ground due to Israeli violations, we remain committed to the two-State solution and the resumed negotiations, with full recognition for the vital support of the United States, the members of the Quartet, the League of Arab States and all other concerned countries. Our hand remains extended in peace. That is why we took the decision a few months ago to participate in a new round of negotiations with the Israeli side aimed at resolving all final-status issues and concluding a comprehensive and final peace agreement.

“I affirm that we began and that we shall continue those negotiations in good faith. We are committed to fostering the most conducive atmosphere for the continuation of the negotiations in a meaningful and credible manner in order to reach a peace agreement that redresses the historic unprecedented injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people since the Nakba of 1948 to the present day. We seek a peace agreement that bring about a complete end to the Israeli occupation and the independence of the State of Palestine on all Palestinian lands occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital; that ensures the security and dignity of our people; and that provides for a just and agreed solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (11I), as called for by the Arab Peace Initiative. In that regard, we stress that that historic initiative, which was widely received by the international community, constitutes a real opportunity for the accomplishment of a comprehensive regional peace in which the Arabs recognize Israel in exchange for its full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the implementation of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

“On this day, which marks the sixty-sixth anniversary of the adoption of the 1947 partition resolution 181 (II), the Palestinian people look forward to the future with great hope. They are determined to remain steadfast on their land and to realize their inalienable rights, confident that the international community will not allow the chance before us to be missed, the chance to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict on all tracks, starting at its basis, which is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is an opportunity to begin a new era of cooperation and coexistence in the region, where there is hope, peace, security and prospects for a better future for all of our children.”

[Original: English]

Copies of this statement in English are available in the Hall. There is also a gift from the State of Palestine to all of those present on this special occasion, the first time that we have met in this capacity following the adoption of resolution 67/19 on 29 November 2012. I hope that members will enjoy both of them.

**Palitha T.B. Kohona (Sri Lanka), Chair of the Special
Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights
of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories**

[Original: English]

It is my pleasure to be present on this occasion, both in my capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and to represent my own country, Sri Lanka. The International Day of Solidarity highlights the struggle of the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights and strengthens the links between their well-wishers worldwide.

Looking back as this year draws to a close, we note that, despite all our efforts and considerable international attention, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has not seen much improvement. The hardships, the humiliations and the denial that the Palestinians have continued to suffer since 1948 are a sad reminder that, in spite of the progress we have made since the Second World War in the areas of international justice, human rights and humanitarian affairs, the international community has still to make any significant impact on the Palestinian situation.

During the annual visit to the Middle East of the Israeli Practices in the occupied territories Committee, on which we reported to the Fourth Committee, we were disappointed to note the same disturbing practices we had seen in the previous years. I recall that the Committee called on Israel to conduct credible investigations into cases of injuries and deaths of Palestinian detainees and prisoners, and the mistreatment of children in detention — a position supported by the UNICEF.

During the past year, Israel has continued its policies and practices, contrary to international law, to transfer its population to the territories occupied since 1967. The routine demolition of houses and the forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank have continued. We have expressed our concern over the continued construction of the wall and the encirclement of Palestinian communities by the wall. The Committee also called on Israel to comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, and in particular to cease the practice of dividing communities and dispossessing Palestinian farmers of their land through the ongoing construction of the wall and the network of roads and highways connecting illegal settlement blocs in the West Bank. We note the

lack of effort on the part of Israeli authorities to prevent or punish violence committed by Israeli settlers.

The blockade of Gaza, a prolonged collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza, has entered its seventh year, although some relief has been provided recently. The Committee noted the deterioration of living conditions for ordinary citizens of Gaza since last November's hostilities. The blockade in Gaza has created an aid-dependent economy, and the United Nations is required to keep the vast majority of the people in Gaza supplied with their minimum necessities.

The Committee highlighted the illegal nature of activities of companies registered in their own countries that profit from and exploit Israel's settlements in the West Bank and the occupied Syrian Golan. It is the Committee's view that these multinational companies and non-governmental organizations help the perpetuation of the occupation. The Committee also called on Israel to end discriminatory water distribution practices in the occupied Syrian Golan and to desist from issuing drilling licenses to companies for oil and gas exploration, which amounts to the legitimization of exploitation of natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan and thus a violation of Israel's obligations as the occupying Power.

The Committee is concerned that, if the unsatisfactory conditions in the occupied territories continue, simmering popular discontent could result in another round of serious violence. We therefore hope that every effort will be made to achieve success in the resumed negotiations so that both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples will be able to enjoy peace and prosperity in their lands.

We note that the Caracas Declaration requested the General Assembly to proclaim 2014 the international year of solidarity with the Palestinian people. This would be a welcome expression of international solidarity with the Palestinian people as they seek to recover their inalienable rights. The world continues to aspire to a peaceful settlement between Palestine and Israel. My colleagues and I join in celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestine people.

**Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of
the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; message delivered by Mohammad Khazaei,
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations**

[Original: English]

I am honoured to address this meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important work in promoting the cause of the Palestinian people. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is a solemn occasion for renewing our commitment to a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and to comprehensive peace in the Middle East — a goal that has eluded us for far too long, with serious consequences. This day is a reminder that the question of Palestine remains the oldest unresolved issue before the United Nations. It is an occasion to reflect on a situation of continued occupation that has dispossessed the Palestinian people and subjected them to untold suffering and tragedy over the decades.

For many years, the Non-Aligned Movement has maintained a firm position of solidarity with the Palestinian people and its just cause, which has rejected Israel's illegal occupation of all of the Arab territories and has condemned the massive, flagrant and systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed by the occupying Power. In this context, at the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Tehran in August 2012, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement again reviewed the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated their grave concern regarding the suffering of Palestinian people under the prolonged and brutal Israeli military occupation. Likewise, they rejected their ongoing deprivation of their inalienable rights, including the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine. The Movement also reiterated its position on the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, based on resolution 194 (III). NAM expresses its grave condemnation regarding the illegal Israeli practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, legal status, character and geographic nature of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, so as to facilitate de facto annexation of more Palestinian land. Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to commit other violations, including the ongoing and routine demolition of homes and the forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, the continued construction of the wall and the encirclement of Palestinian communities by the wall, the dispossession of Palestinians from their agricultural land, violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and their property, and the lack of serious effort on the part of Israeli authorities to prevent or hold settlers accountable for such violence.

The continuing illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip has forced 1.7 million Palestinian civilians into poverty and isolation. The devastating impact of the blockade and the repercussions of the trauma, destruction and displacement inflicted by Israeli military aggression, in particular in 2008-2009 and 2012, have continued to impact all human rights and to disrupt every aspect of life. We believe that the blockade constitutes collective punishment of the entire Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, in defiance of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law and in breach in particular of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory are a matter of grave concern. The recent provocative declarations made by Israel, the occupying Power, regarding plans to construct thousands more settlement units are further confirmation of Israel's refusal to cease its settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. In this regard, NAM calls for urgent action and practical measures on the part of the international community, in particular the Security Council, to compel the occupying Power to cease completely its illegal and destructive settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, United Nations resolutions, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and its obligations under the road map in this regard.

The Movement expresses its deep concern at the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process and calls for immediate and practical efforts to advance a fair and credible peace process based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map. We stress that the peace process must ensure an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory and the other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem; the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination in an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees based on resolution 194 (III).

The Movement welcomes all efforts and initiatives aimed at realizing justice for the Palestinian people and stresses the importance of the admission of the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State by the General Assembly on 29 November 2012, and its admission as a member State by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization General Conference. We consider this development to be a vote of confidence that Palestine meets the Charter criteria of statehood and is ready and willing to assume its Charter responsibilities. We express optimism that the granting of non-member observer State status to Palestine by the General Assembly will help accelerate the momentum in the Security Council regarding its pending United Nations application.

In conclusion, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates once again its strong support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and enjoy sovereignty in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In my national capacity, I would like to inform the Committee that a message of solidarity with the Palestinian people from His Excellency President Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been submitted to the Secretariat for transmission to the Committee.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti,
in his capacity as Chair of the thirty-ninth session of the
Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic
Cooperation; message delivered by Kadra Ahmed Hassan,
Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of
Djibouti to the United Nations

[Original: English]

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This international gathering, held in November of every year, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B, is indeed a confirmation of continued international solidarity with the Palestinian people and the international community's responsibility towards the Palestinian cause.

At the outset, the OIC is pleased that the Committee is proposing to the General Assembly that 2014 be proclaimed the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The OIC supports that initiative wholeheartedly and urges all Member States to support it in the General Assembly this afternoon.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations and all its organs for this Day's celebration. In particular, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for his efforts and effective initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause, which contribute to the promotion of international solidarity and support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights.

The OIC follows with the utmost interest the resumption and developments of peace talks between Israel, the occupying Power, and the State of Palestine and is deeply concerned by the difficulties that Palestinians face on a daily basis.

Despite the near-unanimous and historic international recognition of the State of Palestine at the General Assembly on 29 November 2012, Israel, the occupying Power, has intensified its violations and aggression against the Palestinian people and their territory, sacred sites and property. As we gather today to reaffirm our unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, Israel is pursuing its policy of imposing new restrictions on the ground to change the demographic character of the city of Al-Quds, obliterate its identity and isolate it from its Palestinian environs in order to prevent its return to Palestinian sovereignty, through settlements, barricades and the construction of the apartheid wall. Such acts constitute grave breaches of international law, undermine the contiguity, unity and viability of the State of Palestine and jeopardize the prospects for achieving a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

By the same token, Israel has intensified its aggression against Islamic and Christian holy sites in the holy city of Jerusalem, especially in the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque by breaking into its premises and preventing worshippers from accessing the mosque, desecrating Islamic and Christian sites, distorting the authentic history of the city, changing its landmarks, demolishing Palestinian homes and closing Palestinian institutions with a view to isolating occupied East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings. Such illegal acts threaten to expand the conflict and give it a dangerous religious dimension, which could further destabilize the region. While strongly warning against such unacceptable and unprecedented practices and provocations, the OIC emphasizes that such attacks threaten to further exacerbate the situation locally and in the region, and therefore require that responsible international action be taken to compel Israel to stop those serious attacks and violations.

While reaffirming its unconditional support for the Palestinian position, particularly its demands to stop Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the OIC calls upon the international community to put pressure on Israel, the occupying Power, to stop the activities committed by extremist settlers who block roads, destroy property, seize land, uproot trees, desecrate holy sites and perpetrate other grave violations against the Palestinian people, their lands and their property, which constitute acts of organized terrorism, adding to the record of violations committed by the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories.

The OIC also follows with deep concern the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, particularly the policy of torture and administrative detention whereby Israel, the occupying Power, detains Palestinians for long periods of time without trial or charge. Those represent a blatant violation of international law and require the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to fulfil its responsibilities, abide by the principles of international humanitarian law and respect its international human rights obligations.

In the meantime, we reaffirm the OIC position that the continuing illegal Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip not only is a continuation of injustice and aggression, but also constitutes a form of collective punishment and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law, which has grave humanitarian consequences for the Palestinian people and should therefore be brought to an end.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the support and solidarity of the OIC with the Palestinian people in their endeavour to regain their inalienable national rights, including their right to self-determination and independence and to establish their independent State,

with sovereignty over the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The OIC once again calls on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary concrete action for an immediate and permanent cessation of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. We believe that a permanent peace between Israel and the State of Palestine is a sine qua non if both peoples are to focus their energies and resources on developing their societies in peace, harmony and co-existence.

Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union; message delivered by Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations

[Original: English]

We are meeting here today once again to mark the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, commemorated annually on the anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Palestine Plan of Partition in 1947 (resolution 181 (II)). Indeed, this year's occasion provides us with yet another important opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering support and commitment to the people of Palestine in their quest for the realization of their inalienable rights to statehood and to exercise their right to self-determination, which they have been denied for far too long, with all the consequences that has had for them and the region as a whole. Rarely has the legitimate right of a people failed to be addressed in its own right without so many other considerations clouding it. It is our hope that the direct talks between the two parties will be pursued seriously in order to address all core and permanent issues, based on a two-State solution that ensures the creation of a situation where both Israel and Palestine can live side by side in peace and security. To achieve that, Israeli settlement expansion, the demolition of houses, land expropriation and the denial of the rights to property, blockades, and the closure of border crossings in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, should be ended without further delay. It is difficult to imagine progress until those practices are halted and their negative effects on the peace talks effectively addressed.

The African Union has been supportive all along of the Palestinian people and their legitimate quest for self-determination and to establish their own, independent State. In that regard, for years the Union has consistently expressed its support for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the principles of international law and all the relevant United Nations resolutions, in order to ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the June 1967 borders. However, all efforts made by the international community, including the United Nations, to ensure that the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination are respected, remain unrealized. That the international community has failed to do the best it could — and that, in a way, it has failed the Palestinian people — cannot be ignored. The African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, in its decision of 16 July 2012, reaffirmed once again its total support for the full realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. In the same decision, the Union also called on the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Quartet to take all the necessary measures to maintain security, peace and stability and to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace by applying the provisions of the relevant international law and past resolutions of the Security Council. There can be no doubt that this is in the interests of durable peace in the region, as is respect

for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its continued promotion of, and commitment to, the just cause of the people of Palestine. The Committee's unyielding support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and its efforts to mobilize international assistance for those who need it most, should be commended.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the African Union remains committed and determined in its solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just quest to establish their own independent and sovereign State.

Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States;
message delivered by Ahmed Fathalla, Permanent Observer
for the League of Arab States to the United Nations

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, in my capacity as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, I have the pleasure to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the members of that Committee. I extend warm greetings and commend the Committee's tremendous efforts in support of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the borders of 4 June 1967. I would also like to commend Ambassador Diallo's efforts during 2013, when he convened several meetings, in Rome, Addis Ababa and Beijing, to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause and its prospects.

There can be no doubt that this year's commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is accompanied by a recognition of the political and diplomatic activity launched by the United States Secretary of State John Kerry, which we hoped might lead to positive results and the eventual establishment of an independent sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Despite the international consensus regarding such a solution, however, Israel has continued to defy and violate United Nations resolutions and human rights instruments. It has continued with its settlement policies, aimed at swallowing up more Palestinian land, as well as the cover, protection and support of the Israeli Government for the settlers' activities in a manner that defies logic, attacking the rights of Palestinian civilians as well as churches, mosques and clerics. It also continues to hold more than 4,000 prisoners and detainees, including women and children, some of whom have spent more than 25 years in jail, and to maltreat them in inhumane conditions. All this demonstrates that Government's racist nature and contributes to establishing new facts on the ground, thus threatening to undermine the possibility of a two-State solution and to block any real opportunity to establish a sovereign Palestinian State.

Israel also persists in its unilateral, illegal actions aimed at Judaizing East Jerusalem. It has demolished homes, changed the names of streets in some places and threatened the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs with daily violations. It seeks to change the city's demographic composition, rewrite its history and appropriate its Islamic and Christian heritage by continuing such violations on the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other occupied Palestinian territories, notably in the Al-Agwar area, with confiscations and displacement of the population, who constitute the economic potential of the Palestinian State. I should like to emphasize the responsibility of the United Nations and its

relevant organizations, agencies and funds to protect the Palestinian people and their property and to reactivate the role of the Organization in supporting the sacred and legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

It is now clear that Israeli settlement policies and practices, and the new conditions that are being imposed by calling on the Palestinian side to recognize Israel as a Jewish State, reflect only the lack of real political will to engage in earnest and serious negotiations on all core issues, in consonance with international resolutions and their concrete terms of reference, within a definite time frame and eschewing partial, gradual or temporary solutions. It is no longer acceptable that the Palestinian issue, to which the international community is seeking a permanent solution on the basis of a just and comprehensive peace and the establishment of a viable State of Palestine, should remain subject to Israeli racist policies based on occupation and hegemony.

In the absence of any framework of reference for negotiations grounded in international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, Israel has stepped up its illegal settlement policies and construction in the territory of the future State of Palestine, creating an artificial situation for the Palestinian people, who have existed there since the dawn of history. The Palestinian people and the Arab nations have always been in favour of negotiations for a just peace, a stance that has received no response or positive reaction from the other side.

After nine rounds of direct negotiations, most Israeli leaders have made statements to the effect that the talks will not lead to a comprehensive solution, under the pretext that the Palestinian side has not agreed to the conditions laid down by Israel, including recognizing Israel as a Jewish State, which means denying the presence of the Palestinians who have resided in the territories occupied since before the 1948 occupation. That would create a security panic in the event of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, which means that occupation in all its forms and aggressive practices against the Palestinian people will be continued forever.

Israel has also maintained its unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip and continues to enforce an appalling array of alarming racial practices that call to mind the apartheid policy of South Africa. Such actions have an adverse and dangerous impact on the lives of the more than 1.5 million Palestinians from 1948, imposing and implementing a policy of forced transfers and displacements and denying the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes.

The occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is an occupied territory as defined by international law and by virtue of the United Nations resolutions adopted in September 2012, when Palestine was recognized as a non-member observer State. Israel's unilateral actions are thus null and void. The international community, in particular the Security Council, and all other influential stakeholders, in particular the United States, must shoulder their responsibilities and put an end to the Israeli Government's policies of evasion and procrastination in its response to the peace process and negotiations.

In that regard, we are surprised that the international community appears so powerless and ineffective before Israel's obdurate stance and intransigence, and we call on the Security Council to put an end to double standards, to assume its responsibilities in a genuine and effective manner and to review its working methods in a manner capable of counteracting the unilateral measures adopted by Israel, in order to prevent that country from taking further Palestinian territories and hindering the realization of the two-State solution.

It is high time indeed for the Palestinian people to gain their independence and to live like all other people of the world in freedom and independence. It is time for the international community to work for that legitimate goal by upholding the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to raise the voice of truth. Granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer State should be a step towards affirming the right of the Palestinian people to their territory, which is an occupied territory and not a disputed land, as Israel claims.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the Palestinian people accept the negotiation process and that the role of the United Nations in assisting them to achieve their legitimate rights provides a ray of hope in a world in which justice has been eclipsed and double standards prevail. If the current negotiations fail, the consequences for our region will be disastrous. We do not wish that for our region or any other region of the world. We therefore call on the international community to intensify its efforts and to exert pressure on Israel to respond to the objectives of the negotiations and to seize the chance to guarantee their success in a way that will benefit the peoples of the region and the world.

**David Wildman, Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice
with the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries,
on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question Palestine**

[Original: English]

Let me first express my thanks for the opportunity to be here and for the invitation to speak at the events commemorating and marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I first became involved in solidarity with the Palestinian people in June 1982, just across the street, when the United Nations was meeting here in the second special session devoted to disarmament. I was active in the peace movement and there were 1 million people in Central Park and on the streets to urge Member States to pursue disarmament. One week before that meeting, Israel invaded Lebanon. There was a division in the peace movement at that time. Some of the organizers said that it was about nuclear weapons only, and that no one would speak about the invasion of Lebanon. In fact, no speaker that day mentioned Israel's invasion. We know about the bloodshed that happened that summer and about the massacre of unarmed Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila that occurred in September. When I saw the silence of my own involvement in the peace movement and the incapacity of the international community to protect Palestinian refugees, I knew that I had to become active and take stronger actions in support and solidarity with the Palestinian people. That is how I first became involved.

Today I serve as the Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Racial Justice with the United Methodist Church. There are three components of that work that relate directly to Palestinian rights. I work with Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups and international human rights groups on the ground. I am also involved with advocacy work, both here in the United States through the United States Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, the largest coalition here in the United States that is based on human rights and also globally, through the World Council of Churches and others. The third area of my work concerns corporate accountability. As ecumenical religious shareholders, we have met many companies and challenged their involvement and complicity with the settlements, the wall and the Israeli military and in sustaining and profiting from the occupation. I have therefore also been very involved in the boycott, divestment and sanctions efforts of many sectors of civil society. I am happy to share some of those experiences today.

However, in addition to being thankful for this invitation, I want to take this opportunity also to express my frustration and to underscore a challenge to us all. For too long, the United Nations, the international community and civil society have expressed our solidarity with the Palestinian people through words without actions. In fact, in some cases, our actions that have supported Israel's occupation speak much louder than our words. Today, therefore, I want to challenge us all by examining some of the actions of complicity by the international community that have too long supported, intensified and even profited from Israel's long-standing colonization of Palestinian land and its systematic discrimination against the Palestinian people. Secondly, I want to pay tribute to some actions by civil society and some Governments seeking to end that complicity as a crucial and necessary step to ending the occupation and the long-standing denial of Palestinian rights.

Last month I was in Gaza. It had been nearly a year since the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, and yet the situation was as precarious as ever. Participants have already heard statements by the representatives of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other entities about the desperate situation, the lack of access to clean drinking water, which may well be completely unavailable in two years, and the power outages that have led to sewage in the streets, homes and businesses in many parts of Gaza.

Egypt, sadly, has joined with Israel in sustaining that blockade by closing off tunnels and access in Rafah. The blockade needs to end. We all need to work together for that. Five years since Operation Cast Lead, there has still not been sufficient rebuilding in Gaza. Ten years ago, Rachel Corrie was bulldozed when trying to protect a Palestinian home. She was one of many in the international community that, when it was unable or unwilling to protect Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian population, acted on the ground. Sadly, she, together with a number of other people, and far too many Palestinians lost their lives simply trying to protect Palestinian homes and families. I proffer the actions of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, the International Solidarity Movement and the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel as efforts by civil society to work on protecting the Palestinian population from the ongoing violations. Over the past few months, there have been peace talks. We have heard a little about those this morning. Also, it is 20 years since the handshake upon the signing of the Oslo Accords. While I am a long-standing member of the peace movement and active in Concern for Peace in the Middle East, I have to say that my experience has been that talking about peace has too often been linked with actions that escalate the suffering of Palestinians. More settlements were built under the so-called Oslo peace process than at times when the conflict was more open and overt.

Participants may remember the Annapolis Conference launching another peace process in 2007. Human rights organizations have documented that the number of violent attacks by the Israeli military and settlers was higher following the talks than before. Now, during the current talks, there is a ray of hope. This summer, the European Union (EU) put forward guidelines about ending connections between grants and financial activities and loans relating to the settlements. They are important guidelines but are only as important as the force of Member States that implement them. Now, amid the peace talks, the United States and other parties are urging delay in implementing those guidelines and not to set conditions. Yet I want to recall that when there is talk without actions, it tends to go in the wrong direction.

Now I want to turn to talk a little more specifically about some of the companies and their involvements with the occupation and the settlements. I was also in the West Bank last month. We visited the Palestinian fields of a number of villages outside Bethlehem and Hebron and observed where raw sewage from some of the settlements went down onto the fields and polluted the water, contaminating the fields. While we were there, a "class" trip of eight-year-old to ten-year-old boys

from the Israeli settlement nearby on the hill was walking through the very heart of the valley of Palestinian fields. The adults all had machine guns. We had cameras. We passed each other. I wondered to myself what the young Israeli boys were learning on that so-called “class” trip as they walked on other people’s land at gunpoint as an active intimidation. If that was really about security, why would anyone endanger the lives of children by walking through someone else’s field unless it were also about intimidation. I have to say that such actions are rarely reported widely but that happens every day if one sits and listens to the stories of Palestinian villagers.

I will mention two other places. The Prawer plan is a plan for the Negev that the Knesset adopted recently and that may displace as many as 70,000 Bedouins from their land. Words will not protect their homes and their families. In fact, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations has warned against such actions of ethnic cleansing that would remove people from an area simply on the basis of their identity. In Area C, as members heard earlier, there are similar acts of displacement and home demolitions and of increasingly separating Palestinians from their agricultural lands. There are waste dumps, one of which is operated by Veolia, a French company.

Such companies and kinds of actions cannot sustain themselves alone. It takes a powerful military to enable that. Israel has one of the strongest and largest military forces in the world. Last year, it was the sixth largest exporter of weapons, as well. If one looks at the proportion of the gross domestic product in Israel generated by the arms industry, it was the highest percentage of any country in the world in 2012. Exports have increased by 74 per cent over the past five years.

Arms deals require at least two partners. In that regard, I raise the complicity of the international community. One country after another around the world is engaging in buying and selling weapons, surveillance equipment, security control mechanisms and technology with the Israeli military and Israeli arms companies. There are over 6,700 licensed arms dealers in Israel, and over 1,000 companies that are involved in so-called security exports.

Lest we think that the foregoing is simply about the situation in Palestine, the United Nations recently adopted the Arms Trade Treaty, which is an important mechanism to monitor, regulate, document and reduce the extensive arms trade that has been so deadly in countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, as well as in the United States. Addressing the involvement of the arms industry and companies with Israel in the suppression of Palestinians is therefore an important part of all of us working together to reduce the level of violence and arms in the world.

Some of the arms dealers have identified the occupied territories as a laboratory where they test new weapons and measures of population security technology in the field. Yotam Feldman, an Israeli filmmaker, has a documentary movie called *The Lab*, which documents some of that activity. In that context, I would like to connect the EU guidelines put forth this summer and due to go into effect in 2014 with military deals. Let us apply the EU guidelines and the Arms Trade Treaty to all of the arms deals that are taking place with the Israeli military. In that regard, I include my own Government, the United States, which provides over \$3 billion a year in military aid. Each country has a responsibility to stop that activity.

The United Kingdom Government issued a report to its Parliament in July on export controls for arms. That report documents all of the licences for 27 countries of concern in relation to human rights. There are over £12 billion in contracts and licences for various equipment and military hardware with those 27 countries, one of which is Israel; two thirds, nearly £8 billion of the £12

billion in contracts and licences, are with Israel, and they need to be examined. The United Kingdom has started the process, but it needs to go further.

I know that at the United Nations we often talk about general human rights principles and that we are reluctant to talk about particular countries. It may therefore be my responsibility, as part of civil society, to name some countries and some companies. But I want to remind the Assembly of where that is coming from. I told participants that I first got involved in 1982. In that year and again in 1983, the General Assembly adopted some resolutions calling for an end to all military aid, sales and purchases with the Government of Israel (resolutions ES-9/1 and 38/180). In fact, the Assembly called for sanctions. That was over 30 years ago. What would the situation be like for the Palestinian people and the exercise of their inalienable rights today if the Member States and civil society had joined together 30 years ago in an arms embargo?

Sadly, one of the greatest barriers to such an embargo is my own Government, that of the United States, and its use of the veto in the Security Council. Since 1970, more than half of the vetoes the United States Government has used have been to block international action in relation to Israel's systematic violations of human rights in the region. That is a sad legacy, and I would urge all of the permanent members of the Security Council to refrain from the use of the veto, which blocks the democratic process that is so important and that the General Assembly embodies.

Turning to companies, I also want to look at my role, that is, the role of civil society. I have visited Gaza and the West Bank. I go there regularly. I work on advocacy. Yet every two weeks, some of my money is invested in companies that sustain and profit from the occupation, companies like Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, Motorola Solutions, Veolia and United Technologies. It is not just me, but it is thousands of United Methodists, in fact, millions of hardworking people across the United States, whose pension funds — and we are thankful that we do have pension funds — are invested in companies. There is therefore a responsibility on my part to end not only my personal complicity in the form of my retirement being linked in part to the suffering of Palestinians, but also to end civil society organizations' and those companies' involvement. It is not that I want to just have clean hands; there is a responsibility when one sees harm being done to end the immediate involvement but also to end the cause. I am therefore looking at two things — first, not participating, so I have worked on divestment and tried to move my own personal funds and I have encouraged others also to divest.

A number of things have happened over the last few years. After 10 years of engaging with Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Veolia — the list goes on — of meeting with the companies, filing shareholder resolutions, we have found no significant movement by most of those companies. But there has been movement in civil society. I would therefore like to touch briefly on that point.

Last year, the United Methodist Church joined the international efforts to boycott settlement products and companies that are involved in sustaining the occupation. The Presbyterian Church of the United States also joined in boycotting settlement products. The Mennonites earlier this year voted to divest some of their funds from companies that were involved and have refused to change. Quakers have divested as well. The United Church of Canada adopted a boycott last year. Three years ago, the British Methodists — the list goes on. I do not have time to go through all of the different churches. On campuses, students are calling on their trustees to divest funds. That has occurred at the University of California and Hampshire College and many more. Trade unions have made similar efforts.

There are also the United Nations guiding principles on business and human rights that John Ruggie, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights from 2005 to 2011, worked very hard on. They include strong principles but, again, they are guiding principles, and the question then becomes the power of implementation. When I spoke with John Ruggie last year, I asked him whether, if Governments' failure to act was not changing complicity, businesses were doing better at achieving that end. He said that no amount of inaction by Governments would absolve businesses of their responsibility.

In conclusion, I would like to say that municipalities have joined the efforts of grass roots civil society in dropping contracts with Veolia. In fact, the company has lost some \$18 billion worth of contracts in the past few years, in part due to its ongoing involvement with the occupation.

I hope that we can join together, not simply in talking about peace, but in just actions of solidarity, as the General Assembly called for 30 years ago. Let us together stop arms deals that sustain Israel's blockade of Gaza and enable its ongoing colonization in the West Bank. Let us stop corporations from profiting. Such actions would not in fact apply a double standard to Israel but would rather end the double standard in the international community by holding Israel accountable to the same standards as other nations. International civil society, churches, universities and trade unions are all taking action to end complicity, the occupation and apartheid practices. The EU guidelines are a step in that direction, but only as far as they are implemented.

I conclude by thanking the Committee once again for its invitation and by inviting each Member State to join in solidarity actions by ending our own complicity, individually and collectively, in the ongoing colonization and human rights violations against the Palestinian people. Maybe, as we join our actions, our boycott, divestment and sanctions, they will speak louder than our words in solidarity with the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

**Feda Abdelhady-Nasser, Deputy Permanent Observer of
the State of Palestine to the United Nations**

[Original: English]

On behalf of Ambassador Mansour and the entire delegation of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, I would like to thank you, Sir, and all the participants in today's meeting commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at the United Nations. I would like to reiterate our gratitude to all the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the observers of the Committee, as well as all Member States sharing in the commemoration of this Day, for their expressions of solidarity and support for the Palestinian people. Our gratitude is as immense as the support that has been given to Palestine over the decades, and we are hopeful that in the coming year, the solidarity shown to our people and our just cause will enable us to ultimately realize the peace we have long been seeking, a goal we cannot achieve without the support of the international community. That is a reaffirmation of the importance of these days of solidarity, and hopefully, as was mentioned, the forthcoming proclamation by the General Assembly of an international year of solidarity with our people.

I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation for everyone's attendance and support today, and we look forward to Member States' participation in the debate that will take place this afternoon. As is traditional on the Day of Solidarity, the General Assembly opens the debate on the question of Palestine, an important discussion at a very critical juncture. We will listen attentively to

the messages of the international community, as well as to the presentation of the Committee's report this afternoon by the Rapporteur. We also look forward to members' participation in the evening event in commemoration of this Day of Solidarity, at which, as Ambassador Mansour said, we will have performances by two young and talented Palestinians, Nai Barghouti and Mohammed Assaf, in a demonstration of Palestinian youth and in support of Palestinian calls to the international community for its continued support and solidarity.

Closing remarks by Abdou Salam Diallo, Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

[Original: French]

Before adjourning this special meeting, I wish to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the staff members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information, the Office of Central Support Services, the interpreters and everyone who worked behind the scenes.

Following the adjournment of this meeting, in a few moments we will be showing in this Conference Room a documentary film entitled State 194. As a small token of our solidarity, I would like to invite all representatives to stay on and view this film.

At 3 p.m. the General Assembly will begin its debate on the question of Palestine. I will introduce draft resolutions A/68/L.12, A/68/L.13, A/68/L.14 and A/68/L.15 under that agenda item, and the Committee's Rapporteur, Ambassador Grima, will introduce the report of the Committee (A/68/35). We strongly encourage delegations to support the adoption of the draft resolutions.

I would also like to invite representatives this evening to a cultural event — a concert featuring Palestinian singers, Nai Barghouti and her troupe, and Mohammed Assaf, the winner of the 2013 Arab Idol contest, who was named the Regional Youth Ambassador of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The concert will be held from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m. in this same Conference Room. As seating is limited, the concert will also be screened in Conference Room 2. I hope that all representatives will be there this evening.

III. MESSAGES RECEIVED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

A. Messages from Heads of State or Government

Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan

[Original: Farsi]
[Unofficial translation]

It gives me great pleasure to convey felicitations on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Seizing this opportunity, I wish to reiterate the full support of the people and Government of Afghanistan to the realization of the rights of the Palestinian brothers and sisters, in particular, their right to self-determination and the right to an independent Palestinian State with Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Cristina Fernández, President of Argentina

[Original: Spanish]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the pleasure to express, on behalf of the Argentine people and on my own behalf, our support for this very important day of commemoration and to reiterate our strong belief in the need to pursue talks in order to achieve a peaceful, just and definitive solution to the Middle East conflict that provides for an independent and viable Palestinian State.

It is for this reason that on 29 November 2012 Argentina sponsored the General Assembly resolution whereby Palestine was accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. It is my belief that this resolution represents an international effort to preserve the two-State solution and establish an appropriate framework for peace negotiations between the parties.

Based on that conviction, I stressed in my recent address during the general debate at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly that there has been agreement on the need to recognize the State of Palestine and reiterate the right of the State of Israel to exist within its borders, in security, as essential first steps to undo the Gordian knot that is the issue of the Middle East.

King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain

[Original: Arabic]

[Unofficial translation]

On this day of commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is our pleasure to address to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People our gratitude and appreciation for their persistent efforts in support of the just Palestinian cause.

As we celebrate this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its support to the brotherly Palestinian people in their just quest to enjoy their inalienable and legitimate rights, most notably the right to their independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, on their own national territory, in common with all other nations of the world.

As the world and the United Nations commemorate once again the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and their just cause which enjoys wide and unparalleled international attention, we regret to note that the international community, which has a special responsibility towards the Palestinian People and their sufferings, has failed for more than 65 years to implement its own resolutions relevant to the achievement of a just and permanent settlement.

This year, the world has witnessed the launch of a new round of negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, thanks to the persistent efforts of United States of America. We urge the international community to spare no effort in providing the assistance necessary to help both parties reach a comprehensive, just and permanent settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict after long decades.

In this context, we reaffirm our condemnation of the illegal Israeli settlements policy in the occupied Palestinian territory. The continuation of such a policy shall not only lead to frustration,

despair and tension, which have characterised the region for a long time, but will also jeopardise the peace process and the hopes of the Palestinian people in that respect which, in turn, will only lead to more extremism, violence and counter-violence and increase the possibility of explosion in the entire Middle East.

It is incumbent on the international community today, more than at any other time in the past, to remain vigilant and to closely watch the situation so as to put an end to any practices in the Palestinian territory that may jeopardize the negotiations process. In particular, Israel must be summoned to put an end to its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially the Holy Jerusalem, to halt its repeated aggression against the holy places, notably the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to lift the longstanding unjust and inhumane siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. We also believe that Israelis and Palestinians alike have the obligation to acknowledge each other's rights and to deal with each other in an equitable manner, with the aim of achieving the long-overdue just peace on the land of the divinely-revealed religious, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the place of the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, and the sepulchre of Abraham, the patriarch of all prophets, may peace be upon them all.

The ongoing negotiation process constitutes a valuable opportunity to achieve a just and durable peace. We therefore invite the international community to redouble its efforts to guarantee the success of this phase of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. We sincerely hope that a negotiated settlement will soon be reached, and have no doubt whatsoever that the vision of an independent Palestinian State, viable and living side-by-side with its neighbour Israel within safe and recognized borders, has now become both urgent and implementable, especially after the landmark resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority at the General Assembly to grant Palestine the status of Non-member observer state in the United Nations. That was indeed a historic achievement of the international community in support of the courageous struggle of the Palestinian People.

Based on what has gone before, we urge the two parties to act swiftly to reach a just and comprehensive settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict and to achieve, as soon as possible, a permanent and just peace for the entire Middle East region pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). In this respect, we reiterate the firm conviction we have already announced from the podium of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Bahrain on 9 October 2013, namely that " ...the desired peace in our region shall only be attainable through a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, based on guaranteed secure borders for all the states therein including the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and that we shall relentlessly persist in demanding this, no matter what difficulties we are confronted with, as the demand is just and the conscience of the world cannot disregard it. Notwithstanding the bloody wars and conflicts in our region, we believe that winning the peace is in the interest of all the peoples of this region. Such is the battle for which we should mobilize our efforts".

Is such a noble goal attainable? We are firmly convinced that when there is a real will among the peace-loving countries, working in the framework of the United Nations and with the full support of the entire international community, this ambitious aim will not be out of reach. We will be able, at the end of the day, to achieve the goal of the two-states solution in the region, Palestine and Israel, as they work together seeking a future of peace and cooperation.

For its part, the Kingdom of Bahrain shall remain, as always, faithful to the principles of peace, liberty, justice, self-determination and coexistence, committed to the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and keen to preserve the spirit of consensus and moderation. It

will also continue to be at the forefront of persistent action to enable the Palestinian People enjoy their inalienable rights.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon you.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I reaffirm, on behalf of the Government people of Bangladesh, our unequivocal commitment to the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People to an independent homeland, and a sovereign and viable State of Palestine.

Drawing inspiration from our Constitutional commitment, and in pursuance of our principled position, we have always remained steadfast in expressing our solidarity with their Palestinian brethren in their just struggle for self-determination and statehood.

It is a matter of regret that for sixty-five years the people of Palestine are being denied of their fundamental rights to live freely in their own land in dignity and safety. There is no alternative to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement in the Middle East, at the heart of which lies realization of an independent, sovereign and viable state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace with all its neighbours.

The occupation of Palestine must come to an immediate end and persecution of the Palestinian people and killing of innocent civilians in breach of international humanitarian laws and human rights standards must stop forthright. Bangladesh condemns the continued unlawful attacks on the Palestinian people in Gaza and West Bank and the deaths of innocent Palestinians, including women and children.

Bangladesh firmly believes that the relevant UN resolutions, the Road Map, the Arab Peace Plan and the efforts made by the Quartet (UN, USA, EU and Russia) remain the best guides for achieving a two-state solution. We hope that all concerned parties will take a pragmatic approach for the early implementation of the 'Road Map for Peace' in the Middle East. The glimmer of hope that we had seen earlier this year for the revitalization of the Middle East peace process must be kept alive by the concerned parties in the face of emerging political challenges and security threats in the region.

In anticipation of that, I would like to underline our firm conviction in mutual respect, harmonious coexistence of nations and peaceful resolution of disputes, and hope for a lasting solution to the Middle East crisis that our brotherly people of Palestine so well deserve to mark an end to their legitimate struggle for an independent statehood.

Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil

[Original: English]

As the international community celebrates the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government of Brazil reiterates its strong commitment to the Palestinian people's right of self-determination and for an independent, democratic, geographically contiguous and economically viable Palestinian State, with its capital in East Jerusalem, within the borders of June 1967. We also reiterate our support for resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

Brazil welcomes the upgrading of the status of Palestine in the United Nations last year to that of non-member observer State, and expresses satisfaction at the wide support this initiative received from the international community. It reiterates its support to the admission of the State of Palestine, as soon as possible, as a full member of the United Nations, as it is already the case at UNESCO.

The question of Palestine remains a serious threat to international peace and security. In my statement at the opening of the General Debate of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, I underlined that a durable peace between Israel and Palestine is even more urgent in view of the current changes in the Middle East. The time has come to heed the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for an independent and sovereign State, as well as to realize the wide international consensus in favor of the two-State solution. The current negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians should bring about practical, meaningful and timely results towards an agreement. We must not miss this opportunity to put an end to the Israeli occupation and its serious implications.

Brazil associates itself with the international community in denouncing the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as at the continuation of settler violence against Palestinians. These practices constitute violations of International Law and a major obstacle to the success of the peace process. At the same time, Brazil strongly repudiates any violence against the Israeli civilian population.

Finally, let us not forget that the civil society can play a crucial role in reminding the political leaders in the Middle East and in all other countries that peace in that region is not an option, but an urgent imperative. Brazil is ready to contribute to transform that imperative into an auspicious reality.

Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah of Brunei Darussalam

[Original: English]

On this special occasion, I take great pleasure in expressing once again the solidarity of the Government and people of Brunei Darussalam with the Palestinian people in their struggle for their legitimate rights to self-determination and their own sovereign and independent state in their homeland.

We recall the historic event on this very same day last year when the State of Palestine was accepted as a non-member observer state in the United Nations and in this regard, we reiterate our support for their full membership in the organisation.

Brunet Darussalam is gravely concerned with the situation in the Middle East. We join others in calling for an end to any hardships affecting the well-being of the Palestinian people such as the construction of illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories and restrictions on the free movement of people and goods within Palestine

We therefore support the global efforts in addressing the Palestinian issue, particularly through the Quartet and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

We also welcome the resumption of direct peace talks between Palestine and Israel. It is our hope that a negotiated solution will peacefully result in a viable State of Palestine living within secured and recognised borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We express our appreciation to the various United Nations agencies for their tireless dedication in alleviating the plight of those in need within the region including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

On a final note, we would like to express our gratitude to the invaluable efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in ensuring that the question of Palestine remains central to the concern of the international community.

Xi Jinping, President of China

[Original: Chinese]
[Unofficial translation]

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to, on behalf of the Chinese government and people, extend warm congratulations to the opening of the Special Commemorative Meeting.

The Palestinian question concerns the long-term stability, prosperity and development of Middle East countries, including Palestine. To bring about a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian question at an early date serves the interests of the Palestinian people and people of other countries in this region and is conducive to world peace and stability.

It is important to stay committed to peace talks in resolving the Palestinian question. China welcomes the fact that Palestine and Israel have recently resumed peace talks and maintained the momentum of dialogue. China hopes that the two sides will adopt concrete measures to remove obstacles and achieve substantive progress in the peace talks at an early date.

China has provided sincere and selfless support to the just cause of the Palestinian people. We will continue to support the Palestinian people in establishing an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and we support Palestine in joining the United Nations and other international organizations.

China has been active and steadfast in pushing forward the Middle East peace process. Since the beginning of this year, China has received visiting Palestinian and Israeli leaders, put forward the Four-point Proposal for settling the Palestinian question, and held the UN International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, making contribution to promoting peace between Palestine and Israel. At the same time, China has continued its vigorous support for capacity building of Palestine and improvement of its humanitarian situation.

Looking back at the Middle East peace process, to achieve peace is people's aspiration and it represents a prevailing and irreversible trend. It is our sincere hope that the international community work in unison and make joint efforts to push forward the peace process. China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a responsible country in the world, is ready to work with the rest of the international community and make unremitting efforts for achieving lasting peace in the Middle East at an early date.

**Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme
People's Assembly of the Democratic People's
Republic of Korea**

[Original: Korean]
[Unofficial translation]

I extend my warm militant greetings to you and the friendly Palestinian people on the occasion of the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People".

Our people are sending invariable supports to and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just cause of regaining legitimate national rights for the founding of an independent state with East Jerusalem as their capital by putting an end to the Israeli occupation.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I wish you and your people a new success in the struggle for the fair and lasting peace in the Middle East by ending the Israeli acts of illegal settlement and racial suppression in the occupied territories of Palestine.

Adly Mansour, Interim President of Egypt

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am sending you this message as a restatement of Egypt's full support for the fraternal Palestinian people in their legitimate endeavour to exercise their inalienable rights in full. Foremost among these rights is the inherent right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent, sovereign State with its capital in East Jerusalem, pursuant to the sources of international legitimacy, which include General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the constants of international law and international humanitarian law, the principles of the Madrid conference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In this context, General Assembly resolution 67/19, on the acquisition by the State of Palestine of non-member observer State status in the United Nations, a resolution supported by 138 States – i.e. more than two-thirds of United Nations Member States – is a clear message that must be respected. I call upon the Security Council to respond positively to the application submitted by Palestine more than two years ago for full membership of the United Nations.

We read with great anxiety the latest figures showing a steady increase in the numbers of both settlers and settlements in the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem since the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accord. I emphasise that the continuation of these illegal activities is the principle reason for the failure of previous rounds of negotiations. Furthermore, in this context, I express Egypt's support for the current negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties and repeat our

call for a resolute stance to be taken with regard to Israeli settlement activity in order to help move forward the efforts for peace by making all parties assume their responsibilities and for the necessary pressure to be applied on the occupation authorities to halt these unlawful activities.

Egypt calls upon the Security Council to take the necessary measures to ensure that a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides is reached and that its previous resolutions on achieving a lasting, just and comprehensive peace in the region and mutual security for all parties are implemented, including those resolutions relating to ridding the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction, which are a genuine threat to the security of the region and the world and cannot be considered either a means to achieving security or a deterrent.

In conclusion, I commend the efforts of the committee over the past year and the many international meetings and forums it has organized to provide information on Palestinian rights, condemn Israeli practices and mobilise further support for the just Palestinian cause. I call upon the committee to maintain its important role of making global public opinion aware of the effects of the occupation and helping to confront its unacceptable practices.

My best wishes to you and the members of your esteemed committee for continued success.

Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I reaffirm India's strong and steadfast support for the Palestinian cause. We welcome the recent efforts of Palestine and Israel, mediated by the US, for resumption of direct peace talks and remain hopeful that the negotiations would lead to a comprehensive peace process for final resolution of the conflict within an agreed timeline. India supports a negotiated resolution, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders side by side and at peace with Israel as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet Road-map and relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

I also take this opportunity to extend heartiest congratulations to the people of Palestine and their leadership on obtaining 'Non-Member Observer State' status in the UN General Assembly last year, India has always played a proactive role in supporting the Palestinian cause in multilateral fora. We cosponsored the resolution on enhancing Palestine's status in the UN General Assembly and will continue to support Palestine's bid for full and equal membership of the United Nations.

India has also supported the nation building efforts of Palestine through technical and economic assistance, including budgetary support. We are supporting construction of schools and setting up an IT centre and a Vocational Training Centre in Palestine. Additionally, India contributes US \$ 1 million annually to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees. We are also implementing developmental projects in Palestine jointly with Brazil and South Africa as partners in IBSA. India will continue to support these efforts.

On behalf of the people of India, I take this opportunity to convey our best wishes and warm greetings to the friendly people of Palestine.

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia

[Original: English]

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to once again express the deep and abiding solidarity and brotherhood of the Government and people of Indonesia to the Palestinian people.

I join every Palestinian men, women and children, wherever they may be, in their hopes and dreams and prayers for peace in their land, I reiterate the unshakeable support of all Indonesians for them as they struggle towards their inalienable rights of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

As we all remember with pride, in November 2012 the General Assembly of the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to accord the status of Non-Member Observer State to the State of Palestine. That historic vote was a triumph not only for the Palestinian people, but also for people all over the world who are speaking out in favour of what is right and just.

That landmark vote was a concrete step towards the inevitable statehood which Palestinians have long struggled for. Yet we must not be complacent and we should continue our work for the objective of the full and independent State of Palestine.

Towards that end, Indonesia will continue to render her assistance for the plight of Palestinian. We believe in the supremacy of dialogue over the use of force. And we invest our faith in the successful conclusion of peace talks between Palestine and Israel, resulting in the two-state solution.

Indonesia calls on the international community to unite in redressing the historic injustice suffered by Palestinian people, and to end the denial of their basic human rights. We call upon all members of the international community to recognize the State of Palestine. And we again call on Israel to accord the incomparable gift of peace to the next generation of Palestinian and Israeli children.

Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

[Original: Farsi]

[Unofficial translation]

For the past 65 years, the question of Palestine has not only been an Islamic-Arabic issue, but one of the most complicated political and legal issues at the regional and international levels. During this time, the oppressed people of Palestine have experienced nothing but oppression, displacement, misery, carnage, and occupation of their lands. They have always been deprived of their basic and inalienable rights.

During this period, the occupying regime has been ignoring international law, defying decisions of international institutions, including the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and violating international conventions through committing numerous war crimes, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, massive and systematic violations of human rights, state terrorism, territorial aggressions, expanding settlements and displacing a larger number of Palestinians. In addition, the

occupying Power by acquiring nuclear weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, has become a worrying and troublemaker phenomenon in the international scene and clearly endangered the international peace and security in a totally irresponsible manner.

From the beginning of the tragedy of Palestine, numerous initiatives have been taken by different concerned countries, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, including human rights organizations to address this crisis and reduce the misery of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, issuance of numerous resolutions condemning the occupying regime, presenting different plans for peace and broad participation in implementing these plans, as well as fact-finding reports have all been in this line. I believe that this crisis would not have been so complicated or prolonged if the United Nations, from the beginning of the crisis, had carefully, fairly and in accordance with the principles of the Charter, considered the case of aggression and occupation, as well as the issue of transfer of Jewish migrants to the land of Palestine.

Due to non-compliance of occupying regime, backed by certain powers, with relevant international law and regulations, the international community has not yet been able to find a just solution to the crisis. It is obvious that without political will and only by taking one-sided and biased political approaches, it is impossible to put an end to the Palestine plight.

In accordance with the relevant international instruments including the United Nations Charter, the liberation of occupied territories and the return of all refugees to their home land is an inalienable right. Thus, Palestinians' struggle to achieve their goals in this regard is quite legitimate and lawful. Regrettably, the resistance vis-a-vis foreign occupation has been considered by some big powers as terrorism while the oppressed people and their territories are under exploitation and occupation of occupiers.

It is obvious that the World can only witness a long-lasting peace if injustice in all its form and manifestation, including the occupation of Palestine could be addressed appropriately. No one has the right to ignore a nation's will to revive its historical, cultural and territorial identity. Therefore, relying on the will of a nation is the best option to determine their destiny. In this regard, I emphasize the initiative proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is based on the principles of democracy. We are of the view that all Palestinians who have a legitimate stake in the territory of Palestine, including Muslims, Christians and Jews, and especially among them the Palestinian refugees have the right to decide on their own future in a free and fair referendum in accordance with established international standards.

It is highly expected that United Nations and other international fora, in light of wisdom, moderation and justice, and in accordance with articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Charter emphasizing the maintenance of international peace and security, promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and expansion of friendly relations among nations based on respect for principle of equality and consolidation of the world peace, play their role in resolution of the Palestinian crisis, based on the human dignity and emancipation.

The Iranian nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran have always expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and shown sympathy towards their sufferings. Once again, I would like to stress our determination to stand by the oppressed nation of Palestine and to reaffirm our commitment to fully support them. I strongly believe that days of victory and more pride for Palestine will come soon; a day on which the people of Palestine will freely decide the future of their own homeland.

It is a divine promise that tyranny and injustice will not last long and rightness and justice will triumph.

Khudier Alkhuzae, Vice-President of Iraq

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we declare our principled and unwavering solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people and their just cause, which is the cause of the entire Arab and Islamic nation. However, despite all the sacrifices, sufferings and torments endured by the proud, struggling Palestinian people, who still hold firm to their glorious rights and principles for the sake of which they have made such grievous sacrifices, their cause has not received justice from the international community. Accordingly, we stand together with all honourable men and declare our unqualified support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and their legitimate struggle to realize the hope of establishing a viable Palestinian State, which we trust will soon be achieved, in order to end the suffering of a proud and noble people who deserve to live in their own homeland on their own land with honour and dignity and to prosper in the manner of all peoples and nations of the world.

God is the giver of success.

King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein of Jordan

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am delighted to extend once more my sincere gratitude and great appreciation to you and the members of your esteemed committee for your continuing intensive efforts in defence of the inalienable rights of the fraternal Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to self-determination and fulfilment of their legitimate aspiration to establish a sovereign, viable independent State on Palestinian national soil.

The devoted and praiseworthy efforts which your committee has exerted and continues to exert have a vital role to play in keeping the Palestinian cause active and in the spotlight on the international scene, thus helping to mobilise international support for the Palestinian people's just cause and direct the attention of the entire world to the harsh conditions endured by the fraternal Palestinian people, inconsistent with the values of justice, decency and the most basic human rights, due to the continuing Israeli occupation and iniquitous practices.

The difficult living conditions faced by the Palestinian people and the arbitrary measures imposed by the Israeli occupation have increased the sufferings of the people and worsened the scale of the injustice and oppression they endure. No respect is shown for the resolutions of the Human Rights Council and international charters in this regard. Positive international action is required to put an end to the tragedy faced by our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Positive action is seen to have led to a resumption of direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, under American sponsorship and support, for the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State within the lines of 4 June 1967 and with its capital in East Jerusalem, in accordance with the accepted terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, which meets the aspirations and hopes of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence. However, we express our concern that unilateral Israeli measures in violation of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy, chiefly the continuation of the settlement policy and measures designed to change the identity of Jerusalem and threaten its holy places, are undermining efforts for peace. Accordingly, the international community must take immediate action to compel Israel stop these futile measures, which are unacceptable in whole and in part.

On this occasion, we reaffirm that the two-State solution, which enjoys unanimous Arab and international support, represents the basis for ending the Palestinian-Israeli dispute and the springboard for achieving comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The international community must also shoulder its responsibility to urge all parties to adopt this solution and take advantage of the current negotiations to address all final status issues before the opportunity is lost.

In recent years, we have done all in our power to move the peace process forward and bring about radical, practical and realistic solutions to the conflict. In collaboration with all concerned parties, we are currently working to provide the appropriate conditions to overcome the obstacles faced by the Palestinians and Israelis and enable them to continue serious, direct negotiations in which final status issues are discussed, chief among which are the issues of borders, Jerusalem, the refugees, security and water.

In coordination with the Palestinian National Authority, Jordan will continue to exert all efforts and employ all available means to protect the Muslim and Christian holy places in Jerusalem, safeguard the city's Arab identity, support and strengthen the Muslim and Christian population and assert their presence in the city. Furthermore, Jordan shall urge the international community to wake up to its responsibilities to stop all of Israel's arbitrary and dangerous measures and violations in the Holy City, particularly those targeting Al-Aqsa Mosque and its environs, the continuation of which will certainly frustrate efforts for peace.

Jordan and the Arab and Islamic worlds renew their commitment to achieving a just and comprehensive peace, which will restore the rights of those entitled to them. They further renew their call to end the conflict on the basis of serious negotiations pursuant to the recognised terms of reference, particularly the Arab Peace Initiative, in accordance with a specific timetable, to ensure a settlement that will protect the rights of the fraternal Palestinian people and recognize their right to establish an independent State on their national territory, while ensuring that Israel takes the necessary serious steps toward peace.

We give our blessing to the ongoing efforts of your esteemed committee and affirm our full support for you in all matters designed to restore the rights of those legitimately entitled to them and mobilise international support for the just cause of the Palestinian people. We call upon you to continue these fine efforts to achieve the noble goals that are sought by all so that our region and its peoples may enjoy peace, security and stability.

May the peace and blessings of God be upon you.

Choummaly Sayasone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

[Original: English]

As the world community commemorates the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Lao People's Democratic Republic takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the oppressed people of Palestine and reiterates its consistent and firm support for the just and legitimate struggle to recover their inalienable rights, above all, the right to self-determination and establishment of an independent and sovereign State on Palestinian soil.

Today's commemoration underlines the importance and urgency of finding a solution to the question of Palestine and of addressing the plight of the Palestinian people who live through tremendous suffering and humiliation. We strongly support the renewed engagement of the United States, supported by the Arab League follow-up committee, and many world leaders. It is important that the close engagement of the international community be sustained, to make sure that the parties live up to their commitments, negotiate in good faith, and refrain from steps, which can jeopardise negotiations.

In this regard, we join the international community to call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all its unlawful colonization in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, place a complete and indefinite freeze on all settlement activities, and respond favorably and in good faith to the international consensus in this respect, so as to pave the way for an environment conducive to the pursuit of peace and for salvaging the prospects of achieving a Two-State solution, as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council resolutions and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its longstanding solidarity and unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for dignity, justice and their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel, with secure and internationally recognized borders.

Finally, the Lao PDR would like to take this opportunity to wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble endeavour.

General Michel Sleiman, President of Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Lebanon lifts its voice once more in the face of the injustice done to the rights of this fraternal people for more than 60 years by the Israeli occupation and its aggressive and expansionist practices, which has resulted in the displacement of a large part of the Palestinian people, the eating away of their lands, the erection of separation walls around their peaceful villages and towns and the planting of settlements that imperil their security, stability and sovereignty.

My country, which has been and still is in the vanguard of those defending the rightful issues of the Palestinian people and upholding the legitimate rights taken from them unlawfully,

stands up on this day to affirm its commitment to these rights, chief among which are the right of return, the non-conferral of citizenship on Palestinians in host Arab States and the establishment of a sovereign and free State of Palestine on Palestinian national soil.

There is no doubt that the abhorrent Israeli policies, which aggravate the burden of the injustice and occupation and are incompatible with the provisions of international law and United Nations resolutions, must be resolutely confronted by international authorities, primarily the Security Council, which bears much of the responsibility for restoring the rights of the Palestinians and ensuring that justice and peace prevail in the Middle East, pursuant to the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative adopted unanimously at the Beirut summit of 2002.

In this context, Lebanon shall remain faithful to its commitment and keen to support all efforts designed to ensure the triumph of the logic of peace based on justice and provide the framework for stability and sustainable development.

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia

[Original: English]

On this auspicious occasion of the 36th International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government and the people of Malaysia express its confidence that the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the legitimate rights of the people of the State of Palestine, including the right to decide their own future, would continue to be given consideration by the United Nations.

It is in this spirit that Malaysia fully supported the State of Palestine's bid to become a Non-Member Observer State of the United Nations on 29 November 2012. Malaysia affirms that it will continue to support the State of Palestine in obtaining other diplomatic and democratic recognition and ultimately, achieving the independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Malaysia has long recognized that the question of Palestine lies at the heart of the whole Middle East conflict. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for the international community to continue to consolidate its efforts towards ending the Israeli occupation and realizing the two-State solution. There can be no just and comprehensive solution so long as the people of the State of Palestine continue to be denied of their dignity, rights, lands and homes while Israel continues illegally to remain and settle in the Occupied Palestinian Territories unabated.

I wish to pay tribute to all Palestinians in their struggle to live in freedom and dignity. Malaysia reiterates our strong support to the Palestinian cause and will continue to work with the international community to bring justice for Palestine as we have demonstrated over the past 40 years.

Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, President of Maldives

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Maldives, reaffirm the steadfast solidarity of the Maldives with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause. We reiterate our consistent support towards the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, within a secure and recognized border, and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations thirty one years ago, Maldives-Palestine relations have grown from strength to strength. The Maldives believes in the importance of building international solidarity with the Palestinian people. On 29 November last year, Palestine marked an historic achievement when the United Nations General Assembly granted non-member observer State status to the State of Palestine with an overwhelming support from UN member countries. The Maldives was a proud co-sponsor of the Resolution adopted at the General Assembly that won Palestine the enhanced status. The Maldives also strongly backed the initiative by their Palestinians in bid for full membership in the United Nations, and will continue to show its unwavering support for Palestinian membership in any other international organisation.

The Maldives commends the exemplary work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights, for their contribution to the just cause of the people of Palestine.

The people of Maldives have remained greatly invested, politically and emotionally, in the fight for an independent State of Palestine. We do not believe that meaningful dialogue can be achieved, without the fundamental recognition of the right of existence of the State of Palestine.

The Maldives strongly condemns the ongoing flagrant violations of human rights in the occupied territories by the State of Israel. We are deeply saddened by the recurring cycles of violence and indignity being faced by our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We particularly deplore the effects of this conflict on the children of the region. It is a travesty that the people of Palestine continue to be denied their most basic right: their right to an independent sovereign State. It is only when this basic right is realized that the Palestinians and Israelis can negotiate as equals. And while we welcome the newly initiated dialogue between the parties to the conflict, we reiterate our call on the international community to remain vigilant, and to maintain its focus on reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problems of the Middle East. It is in the interest of the entire international community that a lasting solution is found at the earliest.

King Mohammed VI of Morocco

[Original: Arabic]
[Unofficial translation]

It gives me great pleasure to send this message to your esteemed Committee on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. I commend your untiring efforts to defend the just Palestinian cause and sensitize the Member States of the United Nations to the different aspects involved in this issue and also to the role they are expected to play to bring just, lasting peace to the Middle East, on the basis of international legitimacy.

In this regard, I should like to reiterate the Kingdom of Morocco's full and constant support for the historical, legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to establish their independent state on their liberated territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital- a state living side by side with Israel, in peace and security, in keeping with international legitimacy and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and the International Quartet's Roadmap.

However, in spite of international efforts to revive the peace process, and notwithstanding the flexibility shown by the Palestinians and the Arab side as well as their positive response to the various initiatives undertaken, these efforts have been constantly hampered by the Israeli government's persistent policy of settlement building, Judaization and the confiscation of land and property. Such an attitude undermines all efforts to achieve a final solution to this conflict and prevents the success of the negotiations which have resumed between the Palestinians and the Israelis, under the auspices of the United States.

In this respect, Morocco commends the U.S. Administration's praiseworthy efforts, which have led to a resumption of Palestinian - Israeli negotiations, with a specific timeframe for the achievement of tangible results that can rekindle hopes of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace which guarantees the Palestinian people's legitimate rights.

As Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, and consistent with Arab and Islamic commitments, I have been calling on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and keep up its action to enable the Palestinian people to fulfill their legitimate aspirations. I have also underscored the great risks involved in Israel's continuing aggressive schemes to alter the legal, demographic and religious status of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and to undermine its cultural identity.

In this respect, I wish to call, once again, on the influential international powers to compel Israel to stop all the violations it perpetrates in the occupied Palestinian territories, and to abide by the provisions of international legitimacy so that Al-Quds may remain a symbol of coexistence and peace between the monotheistic religions.

Consistent with our unwavering stance in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, I have keenly sought to ensure that the Bayt Mal Al Quds Al Sharif Agency continues to carry out concrete projects in various social, educational, health and housing sectors. The aim is to help our brothers the inhabitants of Al-Quds to remain steadfast as they confront all attempts designed to undermine and distort the religious and cultural features of the holy city.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my constant, unwavering support for the demands of the Palestinian National Authority under the leadership of my brother His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas. I call on all our Palestinian brothers to work hand in hand in order to preserve national unity so that a fully sovereign, independent Palestinian State may be created.

To conclude, I wish to stress that the two-state solution remains the comprehensive, just and lasting solution which is both realistic and feasible: two states living side by side in peace, security and stability.

Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of Namibia

[Original: English]

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia, and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to reiterate our firm and unwavering solidarity, on this special Day of Solidarity with the People of Palestine.

As we commemorate this Day in Solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, I wish to join the international community in reaffirming Namibia's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination and independence, and call upon the Security Council to fulfil its mandate and take appropriate action to end Israel's continued occupation of Palestine.

I hereby reaffirm Namibia's full support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, its admission as a full Member of the United Nations and its Agencies, and its rightful place amongst the global community of nations.

I wish to convey our best wishes and warm greetings to the people of Palestine.

Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan

[Original: English]

The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people this year coincides with the first anniversary of adoption of the historic UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19, granting Palestine the status of a 'Non-Member Observer State'. Pakistan was proud to be one of the co-sponsors of that Resolution.

We feel that resolution 67/19 was a step towards correcting the historic injustice against the Palestinian people. We would continue to support the Palestinian quest for full membership of the United Nations.

Pakistan has welcomed the resumption of direct talks on the final status issues. These talks, however, must be time bound and result oriented. An agreement has to be based on internationally agreed parameters. Preserving the sanctity of the 1967 borders is of paramount importance. We hope that the nine-month deadline for the talks would be adhered to.

Like other peoples, Palestinians also deserve to exercise their right to self-determination. As we have stood with them over the last six decades, let me assure our Palestinian brothers and sisters of Pakistan's continued support for their just cause.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of Qatar

[Original: Arabic]

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretariat-General of the United Nations for sponsoring this celebration of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Furthermore, I would like to express my profound gratitude to all United Nations bodies, especially the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, for their efforts in highlighting the suffering of the Palestinian people and affirming the need to restore to them their rights in full.

I am delighted that this year's meeting is taking place with the participation of Palestine for the first time as an observer State in the United Nations. This is an expression of the international will in support of the two-State solution and the acquisition by the Palestinian people of their legitimate right to establish an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem, pursuant to all international terms of reference and resolutions, including the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, the principles of the Madrid conference, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

You are all aware that the Palestinian cause is at a critical juncture, in view of Israeli practices based on a strategy of de facto, its repeated aggression against and subjugation of the Palestinian people, the unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip, the detentions, settlement policy, continued imprisonment of Palestinians in Israeli jails and repeated violations of the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the most recent case of which was the permission given by the Israeli authorities for extremists to attack the mosque and worshippers inside. These policies and practices not only represent a challenge to the international community and a scandalous violation of international law and humanitarian values but endanger the chance to achieve peace in the Middle East. While it grieves and pains us that the Palestinian people should be subject to such suffering, we salute their steadfastness and determination to regain their rights, land and holy places.

We support all international and regional efforts to bring about the success of the current negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides to arrive at a final accord and we look forward to these negotiations leading to a two-State solution. However, we feel great concern at the obstacles and pretexts put up by the Israeli authorities which, it is feared, will undermine the negotiations and the entire peace process and frustrate the achievement of peace in the region.

In this context, Israel must demonstrate its genuine intention to achieve peace in the region by conducting negotiations in a serious manner and stop its procrastination and prevarication based on a strategy of negotiating for the sake of negotiating without arriving at solutions. Israel must realise that failure to solve the Palestinian issue in a just manner is not in its own interests and, indeed, will continue to be its principle threat.

Accordingly, the international community calls for pressure to be applied on Israel to abandon the policy of de facto imposition by force, oblige it to adhere to the resolutions of international legitimacy and move the negotiating process forward on proper foundations in order to arrive at a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, the acquisition by the Palestinian people of all their legitimate rights and international recognition of the State of Palestine based on 1967 borders.

We reaffirm the solidarity of the Government and people of the State of Qatar with our Palestinian brothers in their just struggle to end foreign occupation of their land, obtain their legitimate rights and establish their independent State.

Furthermore, we affirm that the continued failure to resolve the Palestinian issue is unacceptable both politically and morally and is a threat to the security and stability of the region and the world. Israel and the international community must shoulder their responsibilities to reach a just resolution of this issue, which has gone on for long enough.

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]

Please accept our sincere good wishes on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The relations between our countries have traditionally been positive. Russia, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a member of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, has consistently called for the realization of the legitimate interests and aspirations of the people of Palestine.

We appreciate your principled position in favour of a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict on the basis of universally accepted international law. We commend your responsible decision to renew the negotiations with Israel.

We support your efforts to restore Palestinian unity on the basis of the Palestinian National Charter and the Arab Peace Initiative. We intend to continue to provide every possible support for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

I should also like to confirm that Russia will continue to extend the necessary cooperation for building the national Palestinian State and ensuring its socioeconomic development, including through such important projects as the building of a multipurpose complex in Bethlehem and the reconstruction in the historic area of the city.

I sincerely wish you good health and further success, and to the Palestinian people I wish peace and well-being.

Macky Sall, President of Senegal

[Original: French]

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provides me with the opportunity to reiterate the unswerving support of Senegal and of our Committee* for Palestine, its leaders and its people.

* Translator's note: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The prevailing situation on Palestinian soil serves as a reminder of our duty to exercise vigilance and galvanize forces as we seek a just and fair solution in conformity with the principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

One year after Palestine was accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations, the international community has no choice but to work to establish a sovereign and viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel, both within secure and internationally recognized borders.

This is the best prospect that the United Nations has to offer the peoples of the region, one that has been scarred by long years of violence and suffering.

I strongly urge the Quartet to work tirelessly to make this United Nations promise a reality.

In that regard, I welcome the efforts of the Government of the United States to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

It is clear that for these initiatives to succeed, all actions that could undermine the trust necessary for meaningful, constructive dialogue must be eschewed.

I therefore call upon the Government of Israel to put an end to the illegal construction of settlements in the Palestinian territories, and to all actions designed to violate the contiguity of the Palestinian territory or alter the historic, multi-faith legacy of the holy city of Jerusalem.

I extend to you, once again, my very best wishes for a successful observance of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and offer my heartfelt encouragement.

James Michel, President of Seychelles

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, allow me on behalf of the government and people of Seychelles, to renew our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people in their continued struggle to exercise their inalienable rights and realize their legitimate aspirations for a sovereign, contiguous and democratic Palestine living side by side with a secure State of Israel.

In strong support of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, we call on all concerned parties to intensify efforts in working towards credible and meaningful dialogue to reach a comprehensive peace settlement.

This is absolutely essential if a just and lasting peace is to be established in the region. Unilateral actions and use of force on the ground will only undermine all efforts to reach the peace and reconciliation which generations of Israelis and Palestinians have been longing.

On this day we call on the leaders of both Palestine and Israel to show commitment, political will and courage while working to meet the legitimate aspirations of their peoples.

We therefore commend all the positive steps taken during the year to resume negotiations and improve the situation on the ground but much more still remains to be done to meet the different

obligations under the various resolutions of the United Nations and other existing agreements. We express our hope that the negotiations will lead to meaningful agreement.

In meeting our common goal for a more tolerant, prosperous and sustainable future for all, we call on the international community to spare no effort in facilitating a viable political process that will make the ultimate goals of statehood for Palestinians and security for the State of Israel a reality.

Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa

[Original: English]

The South African Government joins the international community today in commemorating the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

In concurrence with the international community it is South Africa's submission and contention that the only way to bring about genuine and lasting peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours, is through having comprehensive and unconditional negotiations dealing with all final status issues including the unrelenting expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of Palestine and the continuing occupation of the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories. This will contribute immensely towards peace and security throughout the Middle East.

Today, our attention is focused on the great importance of making progress, not only with negotiations towards the conclusion of the Middle East Peace Process, but also on the fact that the current state of affairs are leaving deep scars on the psyche of ordinary citizens living daily in circumstances which leave much to be desired.

South Africa is in support of all international efforts aimed at brokering a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In doing so, South Africa has voiced its support at multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the African Union, and BRICS to request for all parties to the conflict to negotiate in good faith in order to reach a permanent and just solution.

To our great disappointment thus far, the current round of the Middle East Peace negotiations has failed to produce positive results and we are no closer to an agreed negotiated settlement. It is with much concern that South Africa today joins pleas from the international community for Israel to freeze all settlement activity in order to give the current negotiations a fair chance for success.

The South African Government accordingly calls on Israel to realize that the only way to achieve peace is through creating an environment conducive for a two-state solution, a solution where Israel will be able to exist side-by-side in peace with a viable and fully independent Palestinian state within internationally recognized borders.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka

[Original: English]

The Middle-East conflict continues to attract considerable international attention and resources. Despite all our efforts, the conflict continues. The misery of the Palestinian people is unabated and the security situation remains tense. Sri Lanka believes that only proactive and courageous leadership

can bring an end to this conflict. We are encouraged by the resumption of discussions and hope that no effort will be spared to achieve success in the resumed peace negotiations. A lasting peace accord which leads to the establishment of a fully sovereign and secure State of Palestine and a secure Israel is our sincere wish.

Successive generations of Palestinians have suffered, in particular by being dispossessed from much of their land. The conditions faced by the Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, are unsustainable. An end to the Gaza blockade, Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories, and releasing of more Palestinian detainees will help to reduce the mistrust and bitterness between the parties. An improvement in the conditions of the Palestinians will only generate conditions conducive to serious peace negotiations and contribute to improving the situation of the region as a whole.

The resentment caused by this conflict stokes the fires of extremism in the wider region and will continue to endanger the lives of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Both the Israeli and Palestinian people deserve peace and prosperity in their own lands. We call on both sides to create the conditions for peace by exercising restraint and by ceasing provocations.

Continuing solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle to regain their lands and nationhood has long been a cornerstone in the foreign policy of Sri Lanka. In my own political career, I have consistently supported the Palestinian struggle. Sri Lanka supports Palestine's application for admission to full membership in the United Nations and a two State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Royal Thai Government joins the international community in reaffirming the solidarity and support for the Palestinian people in their quest for their basic freedoms and rights, particularly their inalienable right to self-determination.

Thailand has been a longstanding supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people. Thailand established diplomatic relations with Palestine on 1 August 2012. The first official Thai delegation visited Ramallah in June this year to discuss with the Palestinian authorities on practical steps to move forward our bilateral cooperation especially in development cooperation.

Furthermore, in September, Thailand co-hosted with Japan a meeting of East and Southeast Asian countries to coordinate development cooperation for Palestine. Thailand offered to expand cooperation in various areas, including development, capacity budding and tourism, to support our Palestinian friends in their efforts to build a sustainable and prosperous Palestinian state.

The recent resumption of the peace talks between Palestine and the parties concerned was a welcomed development. We hope that it will, within the announced timeline, lead to a peaceful, just and durable outcome for the Palestinians. We urge all parties to exert all efforts to ensure that the atmosphere remains conducive to successful talks.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the people of Thailand, I send our best wishes to the Palestinian Government and people for their future prosperity, health and peace.

Abdullah Gül, President of Turkey

[Original: Turkish]
[Unofficial translation]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to reiterate, on behalf of myself and the people of Turkey, our support to the just cause of our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

The attainment by Palestine of its deserved place as a sovereign and equal member among the international community is our greatest desire. In this vein, Turkey will continue to contribute in the period ahead to the efforts toward realization of the will of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security under the roof of an independent and sovereign state in order to create peaceful, calm and stable environment which has been wished for so long in the region.

Toward this end, Turkey welcomes and supports the recently initiated negotiation process between Palestine and Israel. It is our sincere hope that the negotiations will pave the way for the realization of the vision of peace with two States existing side-by-side in peace and security on the basis of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

As a matter of fact, the "non-member observer State" status obtained by Palestine with a strong support in the vote held on 29 November 2012 at the United Nations General Assembly is a concrete manifestation of the support extended by the international community to the fundamental right of the Palestinian people to have a Palestinian State.

Our common expectation is that the recently revived hopes for peace are supported with concrete steps aimed at a fair and lasting peace. In this context, the international community should not allow Israel's illegal settlement activities and aggressive intrusion attempts against the Al-Aqsa Mosque to adversely affect the negotiation process. Furthermore, it must step up efforts to ending such activities in violation of international law.

We appreciate the successful endeavors by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in defending the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Palestine, particularly the right to have an internationally recognized State.

I avail myself of this opportunity to emphasize once again our resolve to support the Palestinian cause and to stand in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people and to convey my best wishes for the well-being and prosperity of the Palestinian people on behalf of the people of Turkey and myself.

Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates

[Original: Arabic]

On behalf of the Government and people of the State of the United Arab Emirates, it is my pleasure to extend to your noble person and the members of your esteemed committee the most sincere expressions of gratitude and deep appreciation for your devoted and constructive efforts in marking International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which we observe each year as an expression of the continuing unwavering and principled support of the international community for the justice of the Palestinian cause.

Furthermore, on this occasion, it would be remiss of me to fail to express our appreciation for the dedicated endeavours of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his assistants concerned with the problem of the Middle East to ensure application of the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

Today, we in the United Arab Emirates reaffirm our full support, solidarity with and backing for the rights of the Palestinian people and their just and legitimate struggle to end Israeli occupation of their homeland and recover in full their inalienable national rights, in the manner of all peoples of the world. Furthermore, we welcome the enormous efforts that the United States has exerted and continues to exert to bring about the success of the resumed Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on final status issues on the basis of the borders prior to Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands, including Jerusalem, in June 1967 and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, and thereby rescue the peaceful solution which we have long supported, based on a vision of two States within the framework of the principles of the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, especially resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace.

We look forward to the important role played by the Quartet, including the United Nations, in providing effective support for the resumed Palestinian-Israeli negotiations being strengthened in order to ensure a comprehensive and just resolution of final status issues, principally those of borders, Jerusalem and refugees, within a specific timeframe. However, we are extremely concerned about the ongoing provocations employed by the Israeli Government, which cannot be ignored. The most conspicuous of these are the continuation of the policy of expansion of illegal settlement activity on Palestinian land, including Jerusalem, the destruction of homes and confiscation of Palestinian property and the detention of thousands of Palestinian prisoners, who languish unjustly in Israeli jails. These are clear and serious violations of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), which once more put the entire current peace process at risk and obstruct efforts to achieve peace in the region. To prevent the collapse of negotiations once again, we call for greater international pressure to be applied on Israel to make it commit to an immediate halt of all settlement activity, dismantle existing settlements and remove the illegal restrictions imposed on the Palestinians, including the blockade of the Gaza Strip. We affirm categorically that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land cannot continue. It harms Palestinians and Israelis alike and jeopardizes the security and peace of the region as a whole.

In conclusion, we look forward to the declaration of the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem in the near future as a basic condition for putting a final end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Furthermore, we express our hope that donor States and the international community as a whole will double their support for Palestinian Authority institutions and its recent

economic initiative designed to develop the Palestinian economy and improve the conditions of the people, in parallel with the efforts of the current political process to ensure success.

May the peace and blessings of God be upon you.

Truong Tan Sang, President of Viet Nam

[Original: Vietnamese]
[Unofficial translation]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people (29th November), on behalf of the State and the people of Viet Nam, I would like to extend to Your Excellencies, and through Your Excellencies to the Palestinian people, greetings of solidarity and warmest congratulations.

Viet Nam has consistently supported the just cause of the struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights. Viet Nam congratulates Palestine for officially becoming a Non-member Observer State at the United Nations and strongly supports the efforts of Palestine to soon become a full member of this organization.

Viet Nam is of the view that the Arab-Israeli conflict of which the Palestinian question is the core can only be solved through peaceful negotiations aimed at a comprehensive and just solution on the basis of respecting the legitimate interests of all concerned parties, especially the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish a State of Palestine in their homeland. In that spirit, Viet Nam supports all efforts of the international community that will bring the Middle East peace process forward and urges the concerned parties to work together to realize the achieved agreements, thus contributing to peace and stability in the region.

On this occasion, the State and the people of Viet Nam reaffirm the strong support for the just cause and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. We firmly believe that the struggle of the Palestinian people with the strong support of the international community will achieve full victory.

Abdourabuh Mansour Hadi, President of Yemen

[Original: Arabic]

As we observe International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am delighted to express by deep appreciation for this august organization's desire to establish this annual tradition, which embraces the noblest political, moral and humanitarian concepts enshrined by the United Nations over decades, at the forefront of which is support for the struggles of oppressed peoples and their legitimate right to self-determination and resist occupation.

Furthermore, our celebration of this important occasion, with all that it implies in terms of positive action and significance, is an affirmation of the legitimacy of the struggle of the Palestinian people and their right to resist occupation and establish an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem. These are rights which the Republic of Yemen continues to affirm and to call upon the international community to uphold. The Republic of Yemen further calls upon the international community to condemn the savagery of Israeli policies based on violence, killing, destruction and occupation of land by force, and the policy of settlement expansion despite international calls for this

to be halted and for negotiations to be resumed. In addition, the Republic of Yemen condemns the contempt shown by the Israeli entity for the resolutions of international legitimacy and its renunciation of all agreements and arrangements signed with the Palestinian Authority, thereby confirming that Israel is not serious about moving the peace process forward.

We call upon the international community to put an end to the repetition of such massacres and to expedite the resolution of the cause of the Palestinian people by establishing an independent State on the basis of the 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

The decades-long support of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the Palestinian cause is a positive indication of the international body's neutrality and strengthens our confidence in its credibility and commitment to the responsibilities stipulated in its charter.

The Republic of Yemen expresses its concern at the consequence of Israeli policies designed to obstruct the peace process, Israel's challenge to the international community, its rejection of all United Nations and Security Council resolutions and its failure to respond to calls from the international community to comply with the peace process and halt settlement expansion in the Palestinian territories.

The Republic of Yemen renews its call for the United Nations, the influential world powers in the Security Council, the European Union and human rights organizations to shoulder their responsibilities and pressure Israel to implement international resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, ensure the rights of the Palestinian people, compel Israel to stop following a policy of violence, State terrorism, settlement and menacing of Jerusalem and oblige it to respond positively to international resolutions, agreements and initiatives on fostering the peace process, taking it forward toward wide horizons and finding just and comprehensive solutions to ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the Republic of Yemen calls upon the United Nations to study the mechanics of compelling Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy and to move beyond mere criticism and condemnation of Israeli arrogance, which treats all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions with contempt. It is incumbent upon the United Nations to seek in earnest the implementation of its resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the same way as its resolutions in other parts of the world are implemented.

On this occasion, the Republic of Yemen salutes the heroic steadfastness of the Palestinian people who, with bare breasts and stones, resist the destructive Israeli military machine in occupied Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Republic of Yemen reaffirms its support and backing for our Palestinian brothers until their legitimate goals of freedom, dignity and an independent Palestinian State are realised.

May the peace and blessings of God be upon you.

B. Messages from Governments

Belarus

[Original: English]

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and has the honour to express its cordial congratulations on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, as well as the assurances of sincere friendship and unceasing support.

Taking this opportunity, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations has the honour to confirm the commitment to peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue and progressive advancement of the political dialogue. The delegation of the Republic of Belarus will further exert efforts aimed at just and comprehensive exercise of the rights of the friendly people of Palestine in accordance with international law and consistent position of the overwhelming majority of the United Nations Members States.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations has the honour to inform that a congratulatory letter on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People from His Excellency Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, will be sent to his Palestinian counterpart.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People the assurances of its highest consideration.

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

[Original: English]

On behalf of the Government and people of Bolivia, I would like to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people for their unflagging tenacity and courage as they struggle under highly unfavourable conditions to exercise sovereignty and self-determination.

The struggle of the Palestinian people rests upon the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, which are reflected as well in many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israel from the territories that have been occupied to the detriment of the heroic Palestinian people.

Regrettably, the contempt shown by countries with great military and economic and might has not only affected stability in the region but has also perpetuated and increased the potential for conflict in Palestine, negating the efforts of the Palestinian people to become masters of their own fate.

Our own history has given us a visceral understanding of the pain they feel in being subject to a foreign power, for we, too, were colonized and suffered violence and discrimination in our legitimate struggle to achieve liberation and peaceful coexistence among our various ethnic groups, including the indigenous peoples who have lived here since ancient times.

Our message to the noble Palestinian people is that the international community has seen from their struggle and unflagging courage that as long as unresolved issues persist – what the Latin American author Eduardo Galeano would describe as open wounds in the history of our peoples – there will be no lasting peace and security. The struggle against discrimination, exploitation and the subjugation of peoples must therefore be intensified in order to preserve a culture that affirms life, dialogue and peace, and above all to uphold the credibility of the institutions established in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Ghana

[Original: English]

The government and people of the Republic of Ghana once again, join the international community in expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people in the exercise of their inalienable rights in pursuit of an independent state of Palestine, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and relevant international human rights conventions.

Ghana reaffirms her commitment to a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the question of Palestine and it is our hope that peace talks at advancing the peace process, through respect, mutual understanding and reconciliation will prove successful.

To this end, Ghana hopes that the ongoing peace talks at the auspices of the United States government would generate meaningful and productive negotiations in a peaceful and secure atmosphere, and also calls on the two sides to desist from any actions that might derail the peace process.

May this occasion mark a decisive turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and usher in a new era of stability, sustained economic growth and shared prosperity for all.

Guinea

[Original: French]

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provides the Government of the Republic of Guinea with a welcome opportunity to convey heartfelt greetings from the people of Guinea to the stalwart Palestinian people. The people of Guinea stress once again their support and solidarity for the Palestinian people in their just struggle to exercise their inalienable rights.

The Republic of Guinea, always at the forefront in supporting the heroic fight of the Palestinian people, remains concerned by the deteriorating situation on the ground, particularly in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is growing worse. Despite numerous commitments by the occupying Power, the Palestinian people's ordeal goes on. Violence, arbitrary action, the spread of settlements and the seizure of property are still the daily lot of the people.

The Government of Guinea welcomes the commitment made by the Israeli and Palestinian sides to reach a comprehensive agreement in the coming months. It calls upon them to do everything in their power to honour that commitment, particularly by demonstrating sincere intent in the negotiations and avoiding obfuscation or any actions that might jeopardize those negotiations.

Guinea remains firm in its belief that, on their own, the parties will be unable to rise to the tremendous challenge of peace, a challenge they have been facing for decades. Clearly, they will

need strong commitment on the part of the international community, which must take the initiative once more in order to give the peace process renewed momentum.

The Republic of Guinea reiterates its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and is convinced that peace and stability in the Middle East necessarily involve implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Quartet road map, which envisage the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel in peace, within safe, internationally recognized borders.

Guyana

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People 2013, the Government and people of Guyana renew their long standing and principled support for the Palestinian people in the legitimate struggle for the realization of their inalienable rights to self-determination including the right to a homeland and an independent State of Palestine.

This year's commemoration occurs at a time when a new beginning has been made in the efforts to achieve a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through dialogue. The Government of Guyana therefore calls upon all parties concerned to show the necessary political will and commitment to ensure the present talks result in a positive outcome for the peace process.

Guyana remains committed to supporting all efforts aimed at a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in two states, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and prosperity.

Tunisia

[Original: Arabic]

Tunisia joins the international community in observing International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in the shadow of the harsh humanitarian, economic and social conditions under which this steadfast and valiant people have been living for successive decades.

Since the resolution on the partition of Palestine (29 November 1947), the Palestinian people have been killed, evicted and starved. Their property has been destroyed, all vital utilities targeted for destruction and their lands seized to build ever more settlements. The Judaization of Jerusalem has continued apace and its historical and geographical features have been altered in preparation for declaring it the capital of Israel. These flagrant violations of all international laws and norms and human rights conventions and charters have taken place against the backdrop of an alarming international silence.

The profound developments witnessed on the international scene and the emergence of new focal points of tension in various parts of the world cannot under any circumstances be a justification for downgrading concern with the Palestinian issue, which remains the primary, central issue for all the Arab States, despite all the attempts to misrepresent and falsify the situation and divert attention from this issue, which contains all the elements of an agonising humanitarian tragedy.

Accordingly, the international community must shoulder its responsibilities to help the Palestinian people regain their legitimate rights to liberty and dignity and to build their own independent State, in accordance with all the agreed terms of reference.

Tunisia reaffirms its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and calls upon the international community, especially the active players, at the forefront of which is the Quartet, to assume their historic role and apply pressure to revive negotiations and nurture the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis as the sole option for settling the issue fairly and in a manner that ensures the right of the Palestinian people to a viable, independent State just like any other people. Tunisia believes that there is no longer any justification for the continued international silence regarding the sufferings of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the Diaspora. They deserve the care and attention of the entire international community in a manner appropriate to the scale of their cause and their tragedy.

Tunisia will continue to support the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem, the right of the Palestinians to return to their lands and all the rights guaranteed to them by international charters and norms and vouchsafed by the moral obligations of all humanity.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

[Original: English]

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on the occasion of the 29th of November of 2013, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, would like to express once again its full support for the rights that all nationals from the State of Palestine have to self-determination, to live under internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions from the General Assembly and the Security Council.

To this end, Venezuela reiterates its rejection to all the illegal policies applied by the Occupying Power, Israel, which only seek to disown the rights of the Palestinian people, having as its goal the politic-territorial disintegration of the State of Palestine. In this regard, we demand the immediate cessation of the construction, as well as the dismantling of illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories of the sovereign and independent State of Palestine. The repeated conduct of the Israeli political and military elite flagrantly violates international law while ignoring the calls of the international community, expressed by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

On the other hand, our country regrets that the situation of the criminal blockade that the Occupying Power has imposed to the Palestinian population of Gaza since 2008 still persists, affecting their human rights, which is evidenced in the serious deterioration of the conditions of daily life of the inhabitants of that locality. We demand Israel the immediate and definitive lifting of that brutal blockade, in consistence with the repeated calls of the international community.

The Government of Venezuela positively welcomes the resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel, whose negotiations should lead to the achievement of a firm and lasting peace, in which both States can safely live as sovereign and independent countries, within internationally recognized borders. A negotiated peaceful settlement to this matter is a decisive factor for the peace and the security of the Middle East.

Finally, we reiterate our full support to the request of the State of Palestine to be admitted as a full Member State of the United Nations, while hoping that the Security Council fully assumes the responsibilities conferred to it by the Charter, so that the General Assembly – based on the recommendation of that principal body – can promptly adopt a decision on this important matter.

C. Messages from Ministers for Foreign Affairs

Ramtane Lamamra, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria

[Original: French]

Celebration of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has become a special, annual expression of the international community's support for the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their struggle to restore their liberty and regain their national rights.

On this occasion, I am delighted to extend our gratitude to you and to commend the endeavours of the international community to put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people, living under the yoke of Israeli occupation which, over the decades, has continued to refine its colonial methods of repression, including eviction, settlement, blockade of the Gaza Strip, violation of human rights and the Judaization of Jerusalem, in contempt of the resolutions of the United Nations and international legitimacy.

Today we mark this occasion in the light of particular international and regional conditions that oblige us, more than at any time in the past, to intensify our joint efforts to let the voice be heard of a people who aspire to liberty and peace after being robbed of their land and stripped of their legitimate rights for more than six decades.

This occasion coincides with the first anniversary of the historic vote of the 67th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, resolving to grant Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. This represents an important step and an unambiguous message from the international community to the Israeli occupation and the policies of procrastination it follows to frustrate international efforts to resolve the conflict in the Middle East on a just and lasting basis.

In this context, I recall the historic resolution adopted at the 29th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1974, chaired by Algeria, which granted the Palestine Liberation Organization observer status, and the leading role played by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, then Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his capacity as president of the session, in bringing about this important achievement. As a result, the Palestinian people were able for the first time to have their voice heard by the whole world from the podium of the United Nations, when the late President Yasser Arafat delivered his famous speech offering the usurping occupation the choice between the gun of the valiant fedayeen and the olive branch.

By virtue of its history, Algeria is fully aware of the depredations of colonial oppression. It has nurtured and supported the Palestinian cause in international and regional quarters. Today, Algeria once more affirms its unwavering stance with regard to this issue, especially the enduring right of the Palestinian people to recover their land and establish an independent State with full sovereignty on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967, with its capital in Jerusalem and the right of return of the refugees.

In conclusion, I renew my country's support for all genuine initiatives and serious endeavours to establish peace in the Middle East on the basis of a just solution ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with internationally established terms of reference and principles.

Marcelino Medina Gonzalez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

On behalf of the Cuban people and Government, I have the honour to address the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

As has already become a tradition, in accordance with resolution 32/40B, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1977, each year this date represents an opportunity to recall the day on which the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), in 1947, on the partition of Palestine. That decision gave rise, the following year, to the tragedy known as Al-Nakba, as a result of which more than three quarters of historic Palestine was seized by force, 531 Palestinian towns and villages were destroyed and 85 per cent of the population was expelled or displaced. Consequently, some 4.6 million Palestinian refugees are now scattered throughout the Middle East.

On this occasion, we reaffirm our unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people and the firm and decisive support of Cuba for all action aiming to promote recognition of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and its right to join the United Nations as a full member.

Cuba supports the initiative of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to request the General Assembly to proclaim an International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in order to increase global awareness and empathy for the cause.

On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly adopted, by a large majority, the historic decision to grant Palestine the status of observer State in the United Nations. The Security Council must take action and accept without further delay the request for recognition as a State Member of the United Nations submitted by Palestine in 2011, in line with the expressed desire of the great majority of States.

The first vote by Palestine in the General Assembly, on 18 November 2013, was an important step towards the full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations.

Palestine has demonstrated its commitment to the multilateral system by working with a high degree of responsibility and professionalism in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to which it was admitted as a full member in 2011.

The Palestinian authorities have made progress in strengthening their State institutions in recent years. Numerous reports of the United Nations and other institutions have recognized the solidity of the Palestinian institutions and the capacity of the Palestinians to exercise their sovereignty in an independent State.

However, Israel's military occupation, and its increased aggression against the Palestinian people, particularly against the Gaza Strip, along with the policy of illegal settlements and other colonizing practices, which reveal its ambition to seize the entire West Bank, erase, on the ground, the contours of a viable Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and, therefore, the possibility of resolving the conflict in a just and equitable manner.

We call for a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and uphold the inalienable right of the people of Palestine to exercise sovereignty in an independent State. The

successive resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council calling for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories must be implemented.

We reiterate the need to intensify efforts to resolve the dire situation of the Palestinian refugees, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The steady deterioration of the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as a result of Israel's persistent illegal policies and practices, including grave violations of human rights and constant war crimes, is of grave concern to Cuba and to the other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Cuba reiterates its condemnation of the constant expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the most recent example of which was the announcement, on 3 and 4 November, of new permits to build 1,061 dwellings in the West Bank and 1,225 in East Jerusalem.

This policy is a grave violation of international law, in particular article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying Power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory which it occupies. The policy has a serious impact on the Palestinian population in general, and in particular, on the precarious living conditions of the 1.9 million Palestinian refugees registered in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and is contrary to the objectives of the peace process.

The continuing confiscation of Palestinian lands; the illegal construction of settlements; the alteration of the demographic composition of the population; excavations; the imposition of arbitrary and racist restrictions on movement throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially within and around East Jerusalem; the demolition of homes; the eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem and the systematic destruction of the rudimentary Palestinian economic infrastructure; and other illegal acts of incitement, provocation and aggression perpetrated by extremist settlers against the Palestinian population and their sacred sites must end immediately, as called for in many resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly and in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the construction of the wall, issued in 2004.

Cuba also calls for an end to the prolonged and illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the immediate, unconditional and complete lifting of the cruel and illegal blockade against Gaza and the opening of the border crossings and checkpoints so as to allow unimpeded and regular access for humanitarian aid, essential goods and supplies and to facilitate the transit of persons from and to the Gaza Strip. Cuba also condemns the continued existence of the Wall of Shame, which isolates entire communities and obstructs the formation of the Palestinian State.

The indiscriminate and disproportionate use of Israeli military force against the defenceless civilian population of Palestine, forced detentions, and the torture, maltreatment and humiliation of political prisoners in Israeli prisons must come to an end. Hundreds of civilians, including 33 children and 13 women, were killed and over 1,500 wounded during the large-scale offensive by the Israeli military forces known as operation Pillar of Defence. In addition, over 3,000 Palestinians were detained during that time, in addition to the thousands of others who remain in Israeli prisons and detention centres.

The international community cannot remain impassive and silent in the face of the abuses and violations committed against the Palestinian people; the cycle of violence in this territory, and its spread towards the West Bank, must be stopped. The historical debt to the Palestinian people must be paid.

On this significant date, Cuba reiterates that it will not cease to call for comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the Palestinian people and for the peoples of the Middle East in general and strict respect for all their rights. The Arab peoples, without exception, will always be able to rely on the full solidarity of the Cuban people.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration. Allow me to reaffirm the decisive and wholehearted support of the Cuban people and Government for the important Committee which you head.

Marco Albuja Martinez, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government of Ecuador reiterates its full support for the spirit and nature of the General Assembly resolutions establishing this commemoration, renews its unconditional support for the Palestinian cause and expresses its hope that Palestine will soon become a full member of the United Nations.

The date of 29 November, chosen by the United Nations for this day of solidarity, serves to remind the international community of the injustices and abuses suffered by the Palestinian people throughout its history. This day must always be a time for reflection on justice, equity, respect for human rights and the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence among nations.

And so, on this day, Ecuador calls once again on the international community, in accordance with international law, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and many resolutions of various United Nations bodies, to recognize the rights of Palestine fully and without exception, including those of self-determination and full participation within the Organization.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Arnold J. Nicholson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica

[Original: English]

The commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provides another opportunity for sober reflection on the UN's unfinished business of decolonization and self-determination for Palestinians and other peoples across the world and the right of all States to exist within secure borders.

As the United Nations family observes this Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, there can be no denying that remarkable progress has been achieved in the Organisation's 68-year history. Several countries which were once colonies are now in control of their own affairs and are charting their own destiny.

Having achieved political independence over five decades ago, Jamaica remains a firm advocate of the rights of peoples to self-determination and independence. The resolution adopted last year which enhanced the status of Palestine at the United Nations should serve as a building block towards the creation of an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and solidarity upon which the goal of lasting peace can one day be achieved. Jamaica continues to support the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian question which guarantees the security of Israel and the right of Palestine to an independent, viable and sovereign state.

Jamaica urges both parties to resume direct and substantial negotiations, leading towards a just, lasting and comprehensive outcome. Jamaica stands ready to assist in any endeavour that will forge a sustainable path towards the realization of the legitimate aspirations of both parties.

Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

[Original: English]

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express anew, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, my sincere hope for the realization of peace in the Middle East wherein a Palestinian State and Israel can co-exist in peace and security.

Japan understands Palestinians' aspiration for state-building and supports a two-state solution through negotiations. Japan sincerely welcomes the resumption of direct negotiations between both sides in July this year as a result of vigorous mediation efforts made by the U.S. I also visited Palestine and Israel this July and directly called on both leaders to make progress in the peace process. On the same occasion, I invited ministers from Palestine, Jordan and Israel to the Palestinian autonomous region and held the Ministerial-Level Meeting of the Four-Party Consultative Unit for the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" Initiative.

Japan strongly hopes that the direct negotiations can bring about effective progress toward realizing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the future based on a two-state solution and calls on both sides again to make sincere efforts for peace negotiations. In this regard, Israeli settlement activities are a violation of international law, and such activities clearly go against the efforts by the international community toward resuming the negotiation. Japan has repeatedly called Israel to completely freeze the settlement activities.

Japan has made assistance to the people of Palestine centering on humanitarian aid, assistance for the state-building and reform, confidence building, and enhancing economic self-sustainability. Japan's assistance has reached approximately 1.35 billion US dollars in total since 1993. Regarding the Jericho Agro Industrial Park, a flagship project of the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" Initiative promoted through cooperation with Palestine, Jordan and Israel and with the aim of the development of the private sector in Palestine, Japan will continue to cooperate to achieve further progress in the future.

In addition, regarding the "Conference on Cooperation among East Asian countries for the Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)" which was launched this February aiming at utilizing the knowledge and experience of the economic development in the East Asian countries, Japan held the Aid Coordination Meeting this September. The Business Promotion Meeting will be held this

December and the 2nd CEAPAD will be held next year. Japan will continue to actively promote assistance in building an independent, viable Palestinian state in the future.

Japan will remain actively engaged in both political and economic aspects for the progress in the peace process.

Andriatiana Jacques Ulrich, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar

[Original: French]

Peace in the Middle East is one of the major challenges facing the international community. The question of Palestine is a modern-day tragedy, for, despite many efforts and initiatives, the cycle of violence on both sides has not been at all conducive to an atmosphere of calm and is likely to lead to still greater calamity in the future.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Madagascar wishes to extend expressions of sympathy and encouragement to the Palestinian leadership and people. Now more than ever, it is time to reaffirm support for continued Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a view to reaching a definitive settlement.

Halting the spiral of violence is an urgent necessity. The ongoing aggression is putting the Palestinian people, as well as peace and security in the region, at greater peril, and is threatening world peace.

Backed by strong resolve at both the regional and international levels, the impetus for peace should contribute effectively to bringing all parties concerned closer together by furnishing all the conditions needed for a definitive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a view to having two States living side by side in peace and security, within safe and universally recognized borders.

The recent resumption of negotiations, spearheaded by the United States, has boosted optimism. The establishment of a State of Palestine that is both politically and economically viable requires heightened efforts by both parties. Dialogue must be maintained, continued and strengthened to give peace a real chance.

Special homage is due to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his steadfast involvement with and dedication to the quest for a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

As part of this yearly celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Madagascar has the honour of adding its voice to that of the international community, so that concrete results may be achieved and the negotiations advanced through genuine dialogue structured around peace initiatives that are agreed upon by the parties and backed by the international community.

Zahabi Ould Sidi Mohamed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali

[Original: French]

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to reiterate the steady, unwavering support of the people and Government of Mali for the just and noble Palestinian cause.

It is my sincere hope that the implementation of the resolutions on Palestine will lead to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

José Antonio Meade Kuribreña, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is my pleasure to ask that you convey good wishes and a message of brotherhood from the Government and people of Mexico to the Palestinian people and their representatives.

Mexico has always made known its unconditional support and wholehearted sympathy for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination and the right to establish an independent and sovereign State that is politically and economically viable.

The Government of Mexico reiterates its commitment to contribute to the quest for a just and lasting solution to the conflict that will bring with it stability and development for all the peoples of the Middle East.

We welcome the possibility that the talks now under way as part of the peace process may yield a productive outcome and may encourage frank, direct and respectful dialogue between the parties, based on respect and support for international law.

I wish you every success in the activities undertaken as part of this important day of commemoration and take this opportunity to express the assurances of my highest consideration.

Prince Saud Al Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia

[Original: Arabic]

I am delighted to extend sincere congratulations to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People for the efforts exerted since the committee was established in 1975 in defence of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to self-determination and to their own State with its capital in East Jerusalem, in implementation of the United Nations resolutions adopted in this regard.

On this occasion, I wish to express the Kingdom's deep concern at the worsening situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, as represented by Israel's ruthless continuation of the policy of expanding settlement activity in all parts of the West Bank. Furthermore, Israel is still continuing its attempts to change the nature and character of the city of Jerusalem by seizing land, expelling

Palestinians from their homes and detaining thousands of prisoners, some without charge or trial. The Kingdom condemns the decision of the Israeli occupation authorities to build 1,500 housing units in occupied Jerusalem and affirms that such decisions represent an obstacle to peace and a gross violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, in addition to being a blatant assault on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Kingdom renews its call for the international community to put pressure on Israel to halt its persistent violations of international law and its continuing attempts to alter the situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia vigorously condemns the continuation of the unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip and demands that it be halted immediately. It further demands a halt to all the arbitrary measures and restrictions imposed by Israel on international aid organizations. We demand the demolition of the racist separation wall, which is unlawful in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and according to General Assembly resolutions, which affirm the illegality of building the wall on occupied Palestinian land. Furthermore, we demand that Israel be obliged to compensate UNRWA for all losses and damage sustained to the agency's property and buildings.

Today, the Kingdom adds its voice to those of all peace-loving nations and recalls the suffering of the Palestinian people. Committed to a just and comprehensive peace, the Kingdom calls for action to put an end to this suffering and enable the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights. The Kingdom has played a prominent role in promoting the Arab Peace Initiative, in affirmation of its commitment to achieving peace based on the rules of international law within the Arab system.

On behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I would like to reaffirm the importance of the international community continuing to support the fraternal Palestinian people in their endeavour to obtain their legitimate rights. I further call upon all Member States of the United Nations to recognize the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and to support Palestine's endeavour to obtain full membership of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of your esteemed committee. I hope that it will continue its tireless work until the Palestinians are able to exercise their inalienable and natural rights, including the right of return to their land within their own internationally recognised State.

**Walid Al-Moallem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs
and expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic**

[Original: Arabic]

I am delighted to extend gratitude to your committee on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People for your efforts in organizing this important international gathering to keep the Palestinian cause uppermost in people's minds and prevent it from falling into oblivion as the occupying power would have it.

United Nations committees, investigators, officials and tens, nay, hundreds of resolutions adopted by various United Nations bodies have affirmed time and again what all of us know, namely, that the Palestinian people are subject to the most offensive forms of racial discrimination, subjugation and oppression. The world supposed that it had got rid of the last form of racial discrimination with the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, the occupation

continues to steal land on which to build more settlements and is still building roads that Palestinians have no right to travel on, places to which they have no right of entry and buses on which they have no right to ride. This is going on under the eyes and ears of the world without anyone lifting a finger.

All United Nations resolutions have affirmed that the Palestinian people have inalienable rights and that the occupation is actively seeking to eradicate these rights in order to eliminate the Palestinian problem, leaving the Palestinians in a big prison, surrounded by the racist separation wall and bypass roads, in which hordes of settlers treat the lawful owners of the land as if they were strangers to be evicted. Palestinians, some of whom are children as young as eight, are being arrested daily, while Israel has been refusing for more than 65 years to implement any United Nations resolutions and rejecting any sort of accountability.

The Palestinian people, however, are steadfast and continue to hold their ground. Palestinian mothers still raise their children to reject and resist the occupation and young Palestinian men still long for martyrdom in order to liberate their land.

From very early on, Syria has been aware of the need to safeguard the rights of the Palestinian people and to stand alongside them everywhere in defence of these rights. Syria has given shelter to some half-million Palestinians over the decades and our Palestinian brothers enjoy the same rights as those enjoyed by Syrian citizens, without prejudice to their right of return pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194.

Syria has been and still is under considerable pressure to abandon the just cause of the Palestinian people and to relinquish the occupied Syrian Golan. However, this pressure has not diminished Syrian resolve to stand alongside the Palestinian people until the establishment of their own independent State on their own land with its capital in Jerusalem, pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions, primarily resolutions 242 and 338 and resolution 497, on the occupied Syrian Golan.

Standing today in solidarity with the Palestinian people, we call upon the international community, through you, to shoulder its responsibilities to put an end to the ordeal of the Palestinian people and to take serious steps to stop the human rights violations to which they are subjected at the hand of the occupation and to establish their independent State with its capital in Jerusalem.

D. Messages from intergovernmental organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters

European Union

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the European Union wishes to convey the following message.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a two-state solution and its conviction that progress on the Middle East peace process is all the more urgent in the current difficult regional context. Heeding the aspirations of the people in the region, including those of Palestinians for statehood and those of Israelis for security is a crucial element for lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Ending the conflict is a fundamental interest of the European Union as well as of the parties themselves and the wider region, and it can be achieved through a comprehensive peace agreement, based on the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Madrid principles including land for peace, the Roadmap, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. European Union recalls the applicability of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians.

The European Union welcomes the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties. We remain fully supportive of this process and committed to helping to ensure its success through a comprehensive agreement on all final status issues, within the agreed 9-month timeframe.

In this direction the European Union will continue to work with its partners in the Quartet as well as Arab partners, in the conviction that helping the parties achieve the goal of a two-state solution is the most important way in which all actors of the international community can show their solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The European Union continues to follow with concern the situation in the Gaza Strip. We welcomed the ceasefire that put an end to hostilities that affected the Gaza Strip and Israel in November 2012 and we urge all parties to fully comply with its provisions.

We recognize that the present situation in Gaza is unsustainable and will remain so as long as it remains politically and economically separated from the West Bank. The EU calls for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), the full respect of international humanitarian law and full implementation of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

In addition to the strong support of the European Union for the negotiation process, the EU and its Member States also show their solidarity with the Palestinian People in a number of other ways.

The EU commends the work of the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of the future State of Palestine. The EU is the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority and a crucial political and economic partner of all parties in the region and wants to stress the importance of burden sharing between all current and potential donors. The EU wishes to stress the crucial importance of the continuation of the Palestinian State building process, which the European Union will continue to actively support.

The European Union continues to call for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas, in line with the principles set out in his speech of 4 May 2011, as an important element for the unity of a future Palestinian state and for reaching a two-state solution.

The European Union and its Member States also show solidarity with the Palestinian People through their support of the activities of UNRWA and remain UNRWA's largest, most predictable and reliable donor. The total EU support to UNRWA from all EU instruments in 2013 will amount to

€134 million. The current Joint Declaration governing EU-UNRWA cooperation foresees a yearly EU support to UNRWA's General Fund of €80 million per year.

In this context, the European Union encourages other donors, including first time contributors, to share the burden, and welcomes the engagement by members of the League of Arab States to "achieve and sustain" the 7.8% target for Arab government contributions to UNRWA's core budget.

The European Union will continue to work with its partners within the Quartet, as well as with the other actors of the international community, to contribute to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The EU will continue to provide political and financial support to this effect and, in so doing, will continue to support the Palestinian People in the pursuit of its legitimate aspirations.

Organization of Islamic Cooperation; Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General

[Original: English]

This international gathering held on 29 November of every year to celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, consistent with the UNGA's relevant resolution, is indeed a confirmation of continued international solidarity with the Palestinian people and the international community's responsibility towards the Palestinian cause.

On this occasion, I am delighted to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations and its organs, particularly the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, His Excellency Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for his efforts and effective initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause, which contributes to the promotion of international solidarity and support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights.

The OIC follows with utmost interest and deep concern the successive developments the Palestinian cause witnesses recently. Despite unanimous international recognition of the State of Palestine at the UNGA on 29 November 2012, Israel, the occupying power, intensified its violations and aggressions against the Palestinian people, their territory, sacred sites and property. As we gather today to reaffirm our unequivocal support to the Palestinian inalienable rights, Israel pursues its policy of imposing new facts on the ground to change the demographic character of the city of Al-Quds, obliterate its identity and isolate it from its Palestinian environs in order to prevent its return to Palestinian sovereignty, through settlements, barricades, and the Apartheid wall. Indeed, Israel intensified its aggressions on Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially in the Aqsa Holy Mosque by breaking into its premises, preventing worshippers from accessing the mosque and continuing its provocations of the feelings of Muslims through its vicious attempts to enact void laws in order to divide the Aqsa Holy Mosque in terms of space and time and allow Jews to pray therein. This threatens to expand the conflict to a dangerous religious dimension. While strongly warning against such unacceptable and unprecedented practices, we emphasize that such attacks threaten to blow up the situation in the region, and therefore require responsible international action to compel Israel to stop these serious attacks and violations.

The actions committed by extremist settlers who block roads, destruct property and seize land, uproot trees and desecrate holy sites, and other grave violations perpetrated against the Palestinian people, their lands and their property, constitute organized terrorism that add to the record of

violations committed by the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories. While reaffirming its unconditional support to the Palestinian position, particularly its demands to stop Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the OIC calls upon the international community to put pressure on Israel, the occupying power, to stop these activities and its mounting aggressive practices in all Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem; and to compel it to comply with the terms of reference of the peace process because non-compliance with these terms leads to the extension of the duration of the conflict, continuity of instability and kills the prospects of the two-state solution.

Our organization follows with deep concern the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons and their difficult humanitarian situation, particularly the policy of torture and administrative detention whereby Israel, the occupying power, detains Palestinians for long periods without trial or charge, which represents a blatant violation of international law and requires close follow up with the different international organizations concerned in order to realize their rights and compel Israel, the occupying power, to fulfill its responsibilities and abide by the principles of international humanitarian law and the charter of human rights.

In the meantime, we reaffirm OIC's position that the continuing Israeli illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip is not only a continuation of injustice and aggression, but also constitute a collective punishment and a blatant violation of international humanitarian law, with grave humanitarian consequences on the Palestinian people, and should therefore be brought to an end.

These growing challenges imposed by Israeli occupation requires the international community to take effective and serious collective action commensurate with the gravity of the developments and the size of its responsibilities to consolidate peace, security and stability in the region, lift the continuing historical injustice on the Palestinian people, on the basis of respect for UN resolutions and the principles of international law and the relevant international agreement.

In conclusion, I would like to seize this opportunity to reaffirm OIC's support to and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their endeavor to regain their inalienable national rights, including their right to self-determination and independence, and to establishing their independent state having sovereignty on the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and to find a just solution to the issue of Israeli refugees, consistent with resolution 194 of the United Nations.

E. Messages from civil society organizations

Caritas (Jerusalem)

[Original: English]

It has been 65 years since the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 181, but till today the conflict continues in the absence of a permanent resolution on the ground.

I am afraid that the two state- solution is almost dead and all these negotiations are a big illusion and waste of time. Unfortunately, road blocks, checkpoints, settlement expansions and violence, the separation wall, lack of access to farmlands and to Jerusalem and the Holy places and humiliation are part of our daily life.

The situation is worse in the Gaza Strip where the siege is more severe and the repercussions fatal.

We, at Caritas Jerusalem are witnesses to the disastrous consequences of life under these unjust, unfair treatments day in and day out.

We see its harmful effects on the people in general and the youth in particular. We want our youth to have a better tomorrow and a brighter future. We want them to have a peaceful life where they can develop their skills, their education and their energy for the benefit of their country and for the next generations to come.

Nevertheless, we believe that there are no military solutions to this conflict and there is no force that can control the will of a nation asking for its freedom and there are no people in the world who would accept to live under occupation forever.

Therefore, this occupation should come to its end as soon as possible, once and for ever not only for the benefit of the Palestinian people but also for the future of Israel and the Israeli people.

When calm, tranquillity and peace reign in this region, we will have peace in Jerusalem, peace in the Holy Land and peace on earth. Thus, the Holy Land will become the paradise of the whole world. In fact, peace is the best gift and blessing the world and the Lord might give to this Holy Land.

We at Caritas Jerusalem believe that these issues can only be solved through direct negotiations; failing to overcome mistrust will only condemn further generations of Palestinians and Israelis to more conflicts and further sufferings.

Let us, on this International Day, reaffirm our commitment to translating solidarity into positive action.

On this day of Solidarity, we wish no less than justice, peace and the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; a real reconciliation between the two people and three religions living in the Holy land.

Thank you for your prayers, your solidarity and support in seeking justice for the Palestinian people.

Forum of European Local Authorities for Palestine (France)

[Original: English]

We, Local Governments of Europe, Local Authorities Associations, Members of the Global network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments (UCLG), gathered in Dunkirk a decade after the first European Local Authorities Conference for the cooperation with Palestinian Territories which took place in the same city;

recalling the large number of decentralised cooperation projects with the Palestinian cities and initiatives for peace and dialogue in the Middle East carried out by several hundreds European local authorities;

I.

Considering the extensive efforts that European Local Governments have developed to coordinate their activities at European and international levels especially through the various European-Palestinian cooperation networks such as Euro-Gaza, Euro-Nablus, Euro-Ramallah and the Euro-Jericho cooperation platforms;

Convinced of the necessity to create a democratic sovereign and viable State of Palestine, within safe and acknowledged borders, based on international law, resting on strong democratic local institutions which will be the best warranty for Israel's security and the stability in the region;

Having supported the recognition of Palestine as State observer at the United Nations as well as in other agencies of this organisation, in particular the UNESCO;

Extremely concerned by the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the territories where the State of Palestine should be sovereign, threatening thereby the chances of the Two States Solutions and deteriorating the living conditions of Palestinian citizens and preventing economic development of Palestinian communities;

Concerned by the degrading humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories and particularly in East Jerusalem, area C and Gaza Strip;

Concerned by the situation of the Palestinian refugees on which it is advisable to negotiate and agreed on a solution with both parts;

Underlining the important added value that European decentralised cooperation in Palestine has brought in terms of providing humanitarian assistance, defending human rights, promoting peace, local democracy, sustainable local development and institutional building;

Commit themselves and appeal to all European Local Authorities to promote decentralized cooperation programmes and projects with Palestinian local communities in order to develop with a bottom-up approach the Palestinian local democratic institutions and capacities of sustainable development; the building and the prosperity of a viable Palestinian state and the development of Euro-Palestinian relations;

Commit themselves to intensify their cooperation and coordination at European level in order to increase the efficiency of their respective actions, developing in particular infra-European synergies of cooperation by multiplying thematic and geographical European-Palestinian networks;

Urge the European Union, the national Governments and the United Nations system to recognise the Local Governments' efficient contribution to peace, human rights and development in the region and support their efforts to develop city-to-city cooperation programmes benefitting local communities in Palestine;

Urge the European Union and all national governments to intensify their efforts in order to finalise the creation of a viable and sovereign State of Palestine, according to the UN Resolutions, and in peace with its neighbours;

II.

Moreover considering with great concern the continuing deterioration of the situation in the entire Middle East; Extremely concerned about the failure, 20 year after the Oslo Peace Agreement, of all plans to build peace in the Middle East as determined by numerous United Nations resolutions;

Considering the major and efficient role city-to-city cooperation has played in the reconciliation between Europeans after World War 2, the achievement of a long-lasting peace in Europe, and the development of continental integration;

Stressing the need of more active involvement of local governments, in the different European states, in promoting the peace process from a bottom-up approach, in the form of bilateral, trilateral, multilateral partnerships and projects developed with Palestinian and local authorities and local governments in the all Region;

Reaffirm their conviction that the condition for local communities in the Region to access to a long-lasting peace rests on the recognition of the United Nation “Two States for two People” solution and of the two peoples' right to the same dignity, the same rights, and the same security;

Commit themselves to promote the necessary dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian Local Authorities and to intensify the efforts to develop further triangular city-to-city cooperation programmes and projects involving Palestinian, Israeli and European cities in order to increase dialogue, mutual understanding and common projects between the three communities;

Commit themselves to continue the work for peace and dialogue by actively taking part in the organization of:

- The Second conference on city-to-city cooperation in the Middle East to be held in Jena (Germany) in June 2014;
- The next European Local Authorities Conference for Peace in the Middle East, to be held in Palermo (Italy), in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, in 2015.

Welcome the decision of the European Network Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East to consolidate its work by transforming the Network into a legal association and establishing a Secretariat open to the participation and the contribution of all interested European Local Governments;

Launch a new strong appeal to the United Nations, the European Union and the Member States to act with renewed determination, creativity and effectiveness to build peace in the Middle East beginning with the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;

Invite all Cities and Local Governments to play an active role for Peace in the Middle East through the development of city-to-city cooperation projects and programmes and City Diplomacy.

“I am still strongly convinced that, side by side with national governments and the European Union, local governments from the Middle East have the duty to promote a dialogue, the only solution in favour of a sustainable peace. Following this aim, we, local authorities, will keep on bringing a relentless support in order to establish a sustainable peace process throughout dialogue between two people. The day will come, I am sure of it, when we will altogether carry out, in the Middle East, development projects in favour of peace and in the interest of all” Michel Delebarre.

Israel-Palestine NGO Working Group at the United Nations (New York)

[Original: English]

The Israel-Palestine Non-governmental Organization Working Group at the United Nations extends its warmest greetings on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The working group is a coalition of diverse organizations that have met since 1999 to share information and advocate for a just peace between Israel and Palestine.

The group held a number of events this year including a mini-film festival of films made in Palestine, a remembrance of Palestinian Refugees on World Refugee Day that recognized 4 generations and 65 years of displacement, a briefing by Richard Falk and Phyllis Bennis on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, a briefing by Defense for Children International on Palestinian children held in detention by the Israel Defense Force and the Palestinian Authority, and a presentation by Palestinian journalist and photographer Mohammad Al-Azza.

The group supports the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and affirms that a just resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine would be in accord with all international, humanitarian, and human rights laws and agreements. Such a resolution would include, but not be limited to, the following principles:

- Recognition of the central role of the United Nations
 - Implementation of Security Council resolutions 242, 338, and 446
 - Upholding the rights of all civilians to feel secure within their own borders
 - Ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
 - Upholding the rights of refugees and displaced persons
- Reaffirming East Jerusalem as part of the occupied Palestinian territories
 - Reaffirming the application of international law to Israel and Palestine

The group supports a nonviolent resolution of the conflict and sees violence of all forms as an impediment to peace. It recognizes the ongoing responsibility of all actors, including international third party actors, to contribute to the resolution of the conflict.

To this end, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People we affirm our deep commitment to the Palestinian people and to all persons of good will in the region, looking forward to a time when the rights of all people are recognized and all people live in harmony and peace.

Mennonite Central Committee (New York)

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mennonite Central Committee reaffirms its commitment to peace, justice, and human rights for Palestinians and their neighbors. Together we stand in solidarity not just with Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, but also Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem, Israel, and the diaspora who are facing displacement.

We stand in solidarity with Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem where policies to displace Palestinians from the holy city have become more aggressive. We have grave concerns over the continued policies of house demolitions throughout the city, but especially in Silwan, where 88 houses have received demolition orders.

This displacement also continues in Israel's Negev region, where the Prawer-Begin Plan seeks to displace and relocate 70,000 Bedouin from their ancestral lands.

Displacement does not just exist within the Israel and Palestine boundaries. Mennonite Central Committee stands in solidarity with the 9 million Palestinian refugees that were displaced in the wars of 1948 and 1967. Their continued and unresolved displacement further protracts the injustice in the region. We especially remember the suffering faced by Palestinian refugees caught up in the violence of Syria's civil war.

As Mennonite Central Committee, we condemn policies that displace people and render them homeless. These continued policies of displacement only deepen the insecurity of all peoples living in the region.

As a Christian organization, we make this statement in light of our allegiance to Jesus Christ, who taught us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), condemned the futility of violence (Matthew 26:52), and offered a vision of liberation and justice for all peoples (Luke 4:18-19).

The announcements of continued Israeli settlement expansion and house demolitions call into question the effectiveness and authenticity of ongoing peace talks. Informed and challenged by both our Palestinian and Israeli partners, whose very lives are at stake in this conflict, we call for a just resolution based on the following principles:

- A commitment to respect human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international covenants and conventions.
- An end to the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem as called for by United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338;
- A shared Jerusalem in which the spiritual significance of the city for Christians, Muslims and Jews would be recognized. Jews, Christians, and Muslims should all be able to worship and practice their faiths freely and securely in the land;
- An end to discriminatory confiscation and distribution of land and water resources, including those practices prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and, in accordance with the ruling from the International Court of Justice, the dismantling of the illegal separation wall;
- Justice and security for Palestinian refugees, as called for by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194.

We acknowledge that we do not approach these issues as unconnected outsiders, but with full recognition of our own national governments' roles in either perpetuating or helping to resolve this conflict. We lament and repent of our complicity in the injustices that have taken place, whether through military aid or unjust economic structures. MCC remains committed to advocating for a just peace to our elected officials in government, as well as at the grassroots in our communities and churches.

As members of a global church, we humbly seek to live out our faith while respecting our global neighbors of different faiths. Moreover, we seek to be in solidarity with the unique struggle of our

Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers and to listen to their voices, in particular as expressed through the Kairos Palestine document (www.kairospalestine.ps), which declares this prophetic hope:

In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here "a new land" and "a new human being", capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters.

Finally, we pray that the God of mercy, compassion, justice, and truth would move in the hearts and minds of the powerful and the powerless to move us toward a better future for all.

Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations,
Presbyterian Church (USA)

[Original: English]

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) remembers the rich history of the three monotheistic religions in the Middle East. We reaffirm our deep partnership with our sisters and brothers in Christ and our interfaith partners in the region. We express our long-standing concern for a just and lasting peace for all its people. We recommit ourselves to working for such a peace.

Responding to the production of goods in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory which often exploits Palestinian labor and natural resources and adversely impacts the Palestinian consumer market, the 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls upon all States to prohibit the Import of products made by enterprises in Israel settlements on Palestinian land. This call relates only to products made in the illegal settlements that profit the occupying power and not to goods made in Israel.

The action of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s General Assembly builds upon a consistent historical witness against human exploitation in the service of a God who calls us to seek justice and reconciliation. We look forward to the day when all violence ceases, swords are beaten into plowshares, and God's justice and peace prevail in the Middle East.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with its nearly two million members, works both nationally and internationally with local churches, church organizations and mission partners and holds Special Consultative status with ECOSOC.

Society for Austro-Arab Relations (Vienna)

I would like to start with a personal remark: I was indeed very honored and pleased to receive the invitation some time ago to address this important and distinguished meeting again, despite the fact that is my fourth time within the last 10 years and - as somebody who is directly involved in the Middle East in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular since almost 40 years – I was uncertain what to say.

After so many years, after so many negotiations and so called „peace processes“, I really have the feeling, that everything has been already said. I was and still am hesitant to keep repeating those same phrases, those same accusations over and over again. Indeed the basic problem of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the lack of reasonable and acceptable suggestions for a peaceful, fair and viable solution; the basic problem is that one party - namely Israel - lacks the proper will of implementation.

For 65 years Israel has been aggressively working on the implementation of the Zionist Dream of “Eretz Israel”, regardless of international law and human rights. Although the legal situation is clear, the international community of states, which created the State of Israel by adopting resolution nr. 181, is in fact helpless vis-à-vis this brutal policy of expulsion and dispossession against another nation, the Palestinian.

This unique situation in modern history was and still is possible due to the absolute and unconditional political, military and financial support by the United States of America but also due to the ambivalent and undetermined position of other major players, among them – sorry to say so - Europe.

These are the basic facts and – unfortunately – for many years, for many decades, I haven’t seen any changes to the better. These were the reasons for my reluctance to address this meeting again.

Nevertheless, in the end I took the decision to come and address you, mainly because of one reason: to take up a clear position and to speak out the truth.

Many things have been already said today, many facts have been mentioned, which I totally agree with. I don’t want to repeat the misery of the Palestinian People living under Israeli control in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, while being confronted every day with acts of oppression, expropriation and even continuous expulsion by the Israeli occupation forces. Although almost all Palestinians living in Palestine are victims of Israeli violations in equal measure, I would like to mention one special case, which does not only concern Palestinians but all Moslems, even Christians, in the whole world. I mean the situation in Jerusalem/Al Quds. Israel occupied the Eastern part of the city in 1967 and made it – in flagrant violation of international law – the so called United Capital of Israel in 1980. Since 1967 Israel is trying to reduce the number of Palestinian inhabitants by all means. One very brutal and cynical method is the cancellation of the resident-permits, very often for members of families living in Al Quds since centuries. The total number of Palestinians expelled from their homes by seeing their residence-permits cancelled amount to more than 14.000 since 1967, most of them Moslems but also some Christians.

I came back from a visit to Jerusalem a few days ago and I can say that the pressure on Palestinians in Al Quds is extremely strong and Israelis are doing everything in their power in order to make life for Palestinians as complicated and dangerous as possible. Although the legal situation is crystal clear, many observers and experts, even some Palestinians, tend to believe that the battle on Jerusalem/Al Quds is lost already.

The situation of the people living in Gaza is even more alarming; they are completely isolated and locked-in. It is indeed not exaggerated to call Gaza a prison for its almost 2 million inhabitants. A few days ago I met the UNRWA-field-director for Gaza and he told me, that the UNRWA was forced to stop almost all construction projects due to severe cut of imports from Israel. Moreover, Gaza is seriously affected by the events in Egypt, after the destruction of many tunnels, providing Gaza with all kind of essential materials. I am sure, that all of you are aware of the dramatic energy

crisis, which stopped the operation of most of the water and sewerage facilities. It is really shocking and absolutely not acceptable to see toddlers and small children walking through main streets in Gaza, flooded by sewerage. While the Israeli „games“ are very well known to people in Gaza; now, since a couple of months, they are also affected negatively by the internal conflicts in Egypt. This is – at least for people like me – hard to understand and I would like to call upon the Egyptian authorities to reopen the borders to Gaza again. It's neither fair nor correct to let the whole population in Gaza, most of them have been refugees for decades, pay the price for political differences and conflicts.

There is indeed the risk that Palestinians will find themselves among the main victims of the Arab Spring and its aftermath. The events in Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, even in Lebanon, are annoying and alarming. Many people have been killed and injured and I really see the danger that in the end the Palestinian people will find themselves caught between two (or even more) stools. I am not naive and I know about the complicated and controversial political situation in the Middle East, but it is absolutely unacceptable, that conflicts between „brothers“ are carried out at the expense of Palestinian refugees fighting for survival.

Furthermore I see the risk, that the struggle of the Palestinian People for self-determination and independence is losing ground and support and that Palestinians might become one of the main victims of the internal developments of the „Arab Nation“. As somebody, who is representing a worldwide network of civil society organizations doing their utmost to support the Palestinians, I appeal to the Islamic world in general and to the Arabs in particular to close ranks and – together with the many peaceloving nations in the world – to strengthen their support for the Palestinian People in their just struggle against Israeli dispossession and occupation.

World Young Women's Christian Association

The World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the General Arab Women Federation, join women and men throughout the world in observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Israeli Occupation and the separation wall continue to severely violate the Palestinian People's human rights. All Palestinians are routinely harassed, intimidated and abused by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints and gates. Palestinian women, in particular, are humiliated in front of their families and subjected to sexual violence by both soldiers and settlers. Restriction of movement due to the occupation severely impedes their access to education and health. Restrictions on movement and harassment on checkpoints has seriously affected their feeling of safety, and limited their opportunities for independence. The number of women seeking formal education or employment outside of their direct settings has reduced. Women's health has suffered as a result of their inability to access health services. Pregnant women are vulnerable to long waits at checkpoints, which has led to a number of unsafe deliveries in which both mothers and infants have died at checkpoints. Between 2000 -2005, 68 women were forced to give birth at checkpoints as a result 34 new born babies died.¹

Poverty levels in the West Bank and Gaza continue to soar due to these imposed physical restrictions by the Israeli Occupation. 57% of Gaza households are food insecure and about 80% are aid

¹ UNFPA, 2007. Checkpoints Compound the Risks of Childbirth for Palestinian Women (accessed 2 January 2013).

recipients.² Although thousands of young men and women are graduating from Universities annually, yet the potential for them to get jobs is very limited, thus adding to their sense of hopelessness and frustration. Young people in Palestine cannot see a bright future, which in the long run could create a major civil unrest.

Since the adoption in 1977 of November 29th as the annual observance of solidarity with the Palestinian People, we have stood firm that human rights and international law be protected and affirmed for all. In addition we affirm the role of women in peace building and conflict resolution as enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We also reaffirm our commitment to working for the Right of Return for refugees as enshrined in United Nations resolutions 181 and 194. Also, during this time of renewed peace talks, we support Palestine's right for self-determination as enshrined in UN resolutions 242 and 338 and we call for peace with justice to prevail in the entire region, including in Syria and Egypt.

We ask that these resolutions and international law be implemented and that all measures including economic ones be considered including corporate responsibility in relationship to the illegal settlement building and the selling of its products. We support and welcome Palestine as a non-member observer state to the United Nations but continue to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing occupation, actions that undermine peace negotiations, and obligations to international law as an occupying power. We therefore share this statement with deep pain and anger over Israel's ongoing settlement building project destroying more and more Palestinian farms, confiscating more and more land, and displacing more and more Palestinian families from their homes. Earlier this month on November 12 just before the peace talks were about to resume, Israel's Ministry of Housing and Construction announced plans to construct 20,000 new settlements units in the West Bank.

Finally, we are distressed that Gaza continues to be under siege (since 2007) and that a humanitarian disaster exists with essential power companies operating less than 8 hours a day and some services not operating at all at the writing of this statement.

On this special day we call on governments and civil society to take every necessary step to achieve:

- An end to the siege, an urgent response to the humanitarian disaster in Gaza and a prompt recovery in the provision of disrupted services;
- An end to the building of new settlements
- Implementation of all agreed upon United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine, as well as implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325, as the basis for building peace with justice in the entire region;
- Support for the popular boycott, sanctions and divestment movement against Israel until it respects international law
- An end to the Occupation and the necessary steps needed to begin the construction of peace based on justice for all in the region.

Furthermore, we are calling:

- The Palestinian Authority and institutions to demonstrate strong, cohesive, inclusive and democratic leadership;
- Governments and civil society to stand in solidarity with all Palestinians particularly the women who are affected by this ongoing violence and lack of justice in their lives
- The international community to support all the above actions.

² "THE GAZA STRIP: THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS ON PEOPLE AND GOODS", OCHA, JULY 2013

As organizations that have a long history of working on issues of peace with justice and who have witnessed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948, we stand in solidarity with our Palestinian sisters and brothers on this day and recommit ourselves to seeking a rights based solution rather than a power based outcome.

Thank you.
