



# General Assembly

Seventy-first session

**50**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Wednesday, 30 November 2016, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Thomson . . . . . (Fiji)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## Agenda item 35 (continued)

### Question of Palestine

**Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/71/35)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/359)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/71/174)**

**Draft resolutions (A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21)**

**Mrs. Matar** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver a statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations.

On this occasion, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain has sent a letter of solidarity with the Palestinian people to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he writes:

“The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People reflects the attention that the United Nations and the international community attach to the question of Palestine and their solid commitment to meeting the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and to granting them their rights,

including the right to self-determination and the right to establish their own independent State, similar to other peoples of the world.”

His Majesty also writes:

“The Kingdom of Bahrain has always stressed its support for the establishment of a State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. We have always called on the international community to make every effort to grant the Palestinian people their inalienable rights and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), based on the two-State solution, the Madrid terms of reference of the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative. All of these instruments call for the full withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. They also call for granting the Palestinian people their inalienable rights.”

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, and to all members of the Committee for their valuable report (A/71/35). I would also like to express my appreciation to all members of the Committee for their ongoing efforts to ensure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to allow Palestinians to put an end to the occupation

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and establish their own independent State on their land, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Committee's report reflects the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including with respect to the situation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people. Those rights are inalienable and fundamental, according to Security Council resolution 237 (1967). The outrageous deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories, as detailed in the report, is the result of Israel's annexation and settlement policy and its continued construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and around Jerusalem.

We reiterate our thanks to the Committee and to the Division for Palestinian Rights for their activities during the reporting period, as detailed in the Committee's report. Those activities include the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, which took place in Jakarta on 14 and 15 December, 2015; the United Nations Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine, under the theme of "Civil society action in support of justice in Palestine and ending the occupation", held in Jakarta on 16 December, 2015; the United Nations Round Table on Legal Aspects of the Question of Palestine, in Amman from 15 to 17 March; the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, in Dakar on 3 and 4 May; the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, in Stockholm on 19 and 20 May; and other activities seeking to raise awareness of the just Palestinian cause. We would also like to thank the Department of Public Information for its special information programme on the question of Palestine, for its annual training programme for Palestinian journalists, and for its call on all United Nations information centres to carry out activities related to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its firm position in support of the Palestinian question. We must strive to meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace that will guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, on all territories that have been occupied since 1967. That must be done in a manner that will ensure the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland, pursuant to international terms of reference and the Arab Peace

Initiative, which is the only genuine solution that would lay the foundation for peace in the region.

**Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan): We commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People every year. Yet for far too long the Day has been a somber and grim reminder of the unending suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of an occupier that has shown utter disregard for the principles of international law and the morals of humanity.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential for peace and stability throughout the Middle East. It is also essential to enable us to address some of the drivers of extremism and terrorism. It is that conflict that has contributed most significantly to the anger and frustration in the Arab and the Islamic world. The continued spread of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, the blockade of Gaza, the provocations around the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and the continued imprisonment of Palestinians are all real and present obstacles to a two-State solution. Those actions, along with the recent proclamations from Israel that a two-State solution no longer needs to be pursued, reflect a willful defiance of the international consensus that the only viable option for durable peace lies in such a solution. They are also a testimony to the fact that the occupying Power is being emboldened by the lack of resolute action on the part of the international community.

The 5.2 million Palestinian refugees who were forcibly displaced from their homes nearly 70 years ago and denied their inalienable right to return represent a travesty of justice and morality. Their right to return is pivotal to the vision of a peaceful and stable Middle East. The expropriation of Palestinian lands and the continued expansion of illegal settlements in occupied territories are other egregious Israeli inequities that constitute total defiance of its international obligations.

The so-called legalization bill in the Israeli parliament aims at providing a veneer of legality to that shameless land-grab. The demolition of Palestinian homes and expulsion of Palestinians from their properties further compound the suffering of the people. The collective punishment meted out through the blockade of Gaza, now in its ninth year, continues to wreak havoc on the lives of the residents of the enclave. It also seriously impedes the ability of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to deliver much-needed support to embattled communities as

they try to rebuild shattered lives after the devastation caused by the Israeli aggression in 2014.

Through all this, the United Nations has remained seized of the Palestinian question. Countless United Nations resolutions testify to the political and diplomatic capital spent by the international community on the Palestinian cause. And yet, none of it has been able to transform the grim reality of daily existence for the Palestinian people.

Through its resolution 2535 (XXIV) B of 10 December 1969, the General Assembly expressed grave concern at the denial of basic rights to the Palestinians through collective punishment, arbitrary detention, curfews, the destruction of homes and property, deportation and other repressive acts. Almost half a century later, sadly, the draft resolution that we will adopt tomorrow will speak to the same trials and tribulations. That lack of progress is an indictment not of the commitment of the many countries, including my own, that have steadfastly supported the Palestinian cause, but of the few that have the capacity to bring about material change but lack the will to do so. Renewed demands for the recognition of the State of Palestine are a clarion call that must be heeded.

The inaction of the Security Council has not only undermined its own credibility, but has also weakened the ideals that the Organization espouses — the ideals of human dignity, of peaceful coexistence based on the sovereign equality of all nations, and of the right to self-determination of all peoples. The resumption of negotiations is the only way forward. The Security Council should live up to its obligations and responsibilities and summon the political courage and vision to adopt a resolution with parameters and timelines to end the occupation. However, talks should be meaningful and results-oriented and not a means for providing space for Israel to further shrink prospects for a contiguous State of Palestine.

Another dimension of conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. The Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan is a violation and in blatant disregard of United Nations resolutions. Lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East requires bold decisions. Withdrawal of the occupation forces from all Arab lands, including from Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights, is vital not only

to the future of the next generation of Palestinians but to international peace and international security.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people of Palestine, which has been consistently manifested by its support over the decades. We call for an end to the constant delays and the realization of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which is an essential prerequisite to sustainable peace in the Middle East. The construction of an architecture of global stability and prosperity at this seminal juncture of world history cannot be built on injustice and denial of the rights of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. Al Harthy** (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this special meeting to consider the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East. I would also like to thank the representative of Senegal for his statement on behalf of the President of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (see A/71/PV.49). We commend him for the activities of the Committee.

The Israeli forces' illegal expansionist practices in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and their breach of international law and norms through settlement activity and the building of a separation wall are flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories, as well as of the provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law. My country therefore calls on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to fulfil its responsibility and compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease these practices and policies and its attempts to alter the demography on the ground in Palestine.

We call on Israel to return to negotiations to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and build the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We also call on Israel to withdraw from the Syrian Golan and other areas under Israeli occupation in south Lebanon.

My country wishes to stress that peace and stability can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiations. Our position was succinctly set forth in the statement of my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs during the general debate at the start of the Assembly's seventy-

first session (see A/71/PV.22). We call for serious negotiations that would preserve the rights of all parties to live within secure borders on the basis of two States, Israel and Palestine. We also call upon the international community to support all efforts aimed at achieving a noble goal that is shared by all peace-loving countries.

**Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Fidel Castro — the eternal leader of the Cuban people, of the Latin American people and of the peoples in the world who are seeking development, who has just entered into the pantheon of immortality — spoke a great truth in this very Hall in 1979: “the Palestinian question is the very crux of the problem of the Middle East” (A/34/PV.31, para. 22). In fact, if the international community had complied with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947 — which, just as it created the State of Israel, should also have established the independent State of Palestine and done justice to the Palestinian people — the world would not have had to lament the indescribable tragedies that they have experienced and are living today in the Middle East region.

After 70 years, the Palestinian people are still fighting for the right to self-determination, to exist as a nation and to establish a State, like all the rest of the peoples of the Earth. These rights are theirs not only because of the international community’s recognition, in resolution 3236 (XXIX), adopted in 1974, but also because of the millennial history that precedes this Palestinian population, descendants of the Canaanites and Philistines, more than 5,000 years ago.

On the occasion of the annual observation of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is a priority to recall that after the 1948 war between the new State of Israel and the neighbouring Arab States, more than half of the native Palestinians were obliged to flee or were expelled from their land. By 1949, there were already 725,000 Palestinian refugees. Following the war of 1967, the Palestinian exodus grew, with 500,000 additional refugees.

Seventy years later, the increase in the number of displaced persons is dramatic and inhumane. There are 5.3 million Palestinian refugees located primarily in the Near East, who represent more than 40 per cent of the world’s long-term refugees. That percentage demonstrates a permanent violation of rights in which the people survive, a people whose situation is steadily

deteriorating and who are being deprived even of their right to humanitarian assistance.

This Organization has heard the testimonies of senior officials of United Nations bodies on the difficulties that they are having in providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees and on the obstructions by the Government of Israel to the humanitarian aid agencies on the ground. Similar allegations have been received by the Security Council with respect to other Governments that are also obstructing the work organized through numerous Council resolutions for humanitarian assistance in Syria, the Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen.

My delegation reiterates once again that the lack of effective action by the Security Council, the indifference of the Powers directly involved and the obstinacy of extremist sectors in the State of Israel, encouraged by outside support, have generated unilateral policies that, as in the case of the Gaza Strip blockade, suffocate its people, stifle its economy and impede reconstruction.

Meanwhile, in the occupied Palestinian territory, there is new legislation that contains discriminatory, anti-democratic provisions that could pose a serious threat to the human rights of Palestinian citizens in Israel and Palestinians who live in the territory occupied in 1967. Such laws and draft laws seek, inter alia, to strip Arab citizens of their land and exclude them from it, regulate their citizenship, undermine the ability of Arab citizens of Israel and their parliamentary representatives to take part in the political life of the country, penalize political expression or acts that challenge the Jewish or Zionist character of the State and give priority to Jewish citizens when State resources are being allocated. According to a recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, presented to the Special Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the occupation imposes high costs on the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Security Council cannot continue to shirk its responsibility or ignore the support of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations for the Palestinian cause. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility and overcome its silence and paralysis on the issue. A serious historic responsibility falls to it, particularly to some of its permanent members. A definitive response that rejects the policy of building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, which

is threatening the two-State solution, as outlined by the Quartet in its July 2016 report, is the only path to lasting peace. It takes into account Israel's security needs and Palestinian aspirations of sovereignty and independence and could end the occupation that began in 1967.

Once again, we urge Israel — a State member of the international community that was born out of a decision by this Organization — to respect international law and the opinion of the community of nations, which, year after year, calls for an end to the policy of expansion and the building of settlements. As our delegation has previously stated, the question of Palestine is an eminently political conflict that requires a political solution. Its basis lies in the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and depends on an overall solution to the problem of the Middle East. The region has already been the battleground for four wars and, now more than ever, the present conflict is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The bilateral formula for the quest for peace is direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Such negotiations have been supported by the international community but regrettably have not yielded any results or progress. Seventy years of waiting is quite enough. Unfortunately, we believe that this path has been exhausted. That is why our delegation values and voices its support for the various recent initiatives that have emerged recently to promote the peace process between Israel and Palestine, such as the French and Egyptian initiative, and Russia's more recent proposal to host a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

This legally organized community has a duty and a debt to return the rights of the Palestinian people to them and finalize the establishment of an independent State of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, as was established in the 1947 partition plan (see resolution 181 (II)). My delegation would like to firmly reiterate once again the support of the Government and people of Ecuador for the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Next year, 2017, should be the year the foreign occupation of the Palestinian territory comes to an end.

I will conclude with another quotation from Fidel Castro. He spoke these words in the General Assembly Hall — at this very rostrum — in 1979, as he made a

statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries:

“From the bottom of our heart, we repudiated the merciless persecution and genocide that the Nazis once visited on the Jews, but there is nothing in recent history that parallels it more closely than the dispossession, persecution and genocide that imperialism and Zionism are currently practicing against the Palestinian people. Pushed off their land, expelled from their own country, scattered throughout the world, persecuted and murdered, the heroic Palestinians are a vivid example of sacrifice and patriotism, living symbols of the most terrible crime of our era” (*A/34/PV.31, para. 24*).

**Mr. Thammavongsa** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): As of today, the question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than six decades, and it is unfortunate that the Palestinian people still have no glimmer of hope that their right to self-determination that will lead to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine will be realized. It is therefore time for the international community to take bold steps to create favourable conditions for the return by all parties concerned to dialogue and negotiations in order to resolve this protracted conflict and realize the two-State solution so that Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace.

We are concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip following the war in 2014. At their current rate, efforts to address humanitarian needs and rebuild homes to improve the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinian people affected by the war are insufficient due to the blockade, severe import restrictions and unfulfilled donor pledges. My delegation therefore calls for the lifting of the blockade and urges the international community to provide support and aid to Palestine so that the humanitarian assistance and reconstruction process can be expedited. In addition, the continued illegal settlement activities and destruction of properties, homes and economic institutions in the occupied territory have led to the further deterioration of the already grave socioeconomic situation that the Palestinian people are facing.

This constitutes a breach of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, and acts as an impediment to the peace process and opportunities for negotiations. Such acts should therefore be stopped in order to create a

conducive environment for the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table and find a just and lasting solution to the long-overdue question of Palestine. This solution must be based on United Nations resolutions and the Quartet road map, which envisage a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine and wishes to reaffirm its consistent support for the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine that is a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. We welcome other countries' decisions to recognize the State of Palestine and hope that more will do so in future. We believe that the more recognition there is for the State of Palestine, the more positive the contribution will be to expediting a peaceful solution to this long-overdue issue.

While waiting to see the full-fledged, independent State of Palestine, we take this opportunity to commend the role and work of the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for their support and assistance to the millions of Palestinian people in need during all these years despite multiple difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble endeavours to achieve a just, peaceful, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Al Musharakh** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation and I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Cuba at the passing of the former President, His Excellency Mr. Fidel Castro.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the words of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, in his letter addressed to the Chair of 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. In that letter, His Highness addressed the support of the United Arab Emirates for the people and the Government of Palestine as they strive to achieve their legitimate aspirations to establish

a sovereign and independent State such as those other peoples of the world enjoy.

The United Arab Emirates expresses its concern with regard to the deteriorating humanitarian and security and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as well as to the escalation of violence and the absence of a solution that would uphold the Palestinians' inalienable rights, despite all the resolutions of and efforts by the United Nations, its agencies and other regional and international bodies to solve the Palestinian question. The tragedy of the Palestinian people has continued for 70 years. The United Arab Emirates believes that this international impotence will persist as long as Israel continues with its illegitimate and illegal practices and its aggressive policies designed to oppress the Palestinian people. Israel continues to destroy and demolish Palestinian property, confiscate Palestinian lands and forcibly displace Palestinians, while using excessive force against women and children.

In Gaza, Israel continues its inhumane embargo and blockade which has led to a deteriorating humanitarian situation and to rising unemployment. Israel persists in its expanding its settlements, which is considered illegal and prohibited under international humanitarian law, having thus disregarded all international calls to cease these activities. These activities undermine the two-State solution and constitute an obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East.

In the light of this situation, settlers continue their violence against the Palestinian people, while Israel persists in its exploitation of the natural resources of occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan. Israel continues to take illegal measures to change the character of Jerusalem. It persists in its systematic attacks against Christian and Islamic holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in violation of international treaties.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns all Israeli violations and acts of oppression that run counter to international human rights and humanitarian law and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We call on Israel to cease those violations and demonstrate genuine political will towards achieving a true peace in the region. We denounce the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, as it threatens the stability and security of the region and plays into the hands of terrorist and extremist groups.

It is high time for the international community to fulfil its legal, political and material responsibilities and compel Israel to immediately cease all its illegal practices. We call on the international community, the Quartet and the Security Council to act decisively and immediately, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, take all necessary measures to salvage the two-State solution and end the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. We stress the need for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid Principles.

**Mr. Alhakim** (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation and I would like to express our sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Cuba at the passing of the former President, His Excellency Mr. Fidel Castro.

Today, on behalf of the President of Iraq, I would like to deliver this statement addressed to the Palestinian people:

“The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People reflects and renews the global and ongoing responsibility of the international community to address the Palestinian question as well as its commitment to upholding the Palestinian people’s legitimate rights in their just struggle for self-determination. It also reflects the need to end the unjust Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory so that Palestinians can establish their own independent State, as other peoples of the world have done.

“The Republic of Iraq has long supported addressing the question of Palestine and its people’s struggle to see their legitimate rights fulfilled. We are extremely concerned at the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of Israel’s continued disregard for international resolutions and persistent, aggressive attacks on the Gaza Strip, in particular, resulting in disastrous consequences and the death and injury of hundreds of civilians, including women, children and the elderly. Those attacks have also destroyed infrastructure, schools — including schools administered by the United Nations Relief

and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — and holy places.

“Israel also continues to play out its expansionist policy by building settlements in the heart of Palestinian cities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Those practices have perpetuated the suffering of the Palestinian people, who have lost all hope of seeing the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace, given the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 and despite the passing of 24 years since the first round of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians was undertaken.

“On this International Day, the Republic of Iraq stresses that a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question is possible only through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, a fully fledged State, along the lines of the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-State solution and international resolutions, including the relevant United Nations resolutions.

“We call on those countries that have yet to recognize the State of Palestine, including European countries, to recognize the State of Palestine, as the Kingdom of Sweden has done. We call on them to support the aspirations of the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate rights, given that such recognition would contribute to peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

“The Republic of Iraq strongly condemns all Israeli attacks on Palestinian territory. We also express our full support for the Palestinian Authority and our solidarity with the Palestinian people. We call on Arab countries and the international community to support the efforts of the Palestinian National Authority in combating the negative consequences of the Israeli occupation, especially at the socioeconomic level, in the occupied territories and in Jerusalem. We call on them to work together to strengthen national unity and create a united front, with a view to defending the Palestinians’ legitimate rights.”

**Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Israeli occupation of Palestine is now in its fiftieth year. Occupation is by definition temporary, but when an occupation, such as that of Palestine by Israel, is moving steadily towards semi-permanent status, it fuels

the continuation of a conflict that is now the oldest and most dangerous in the Middle East. It erodes prospects for coexistence and mutual respect. As described by the Secretary-General, it has turned the region into a fertile ground for hatred and extremism.

The international community has continuously advocated for a solution to the question of Palestine that upholds the Palestinian people's legitimate right to self-determination and the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples to live in peace as equals in two independent States, side by side, on the basis of international resolutions, within the borders of 4 June 1967. However, today, 23 years after the Oslo Accords, instead of witnessing the birth of a sovereign Palestinian State in accordance with resolutions and international legitimacy, we are witnessing the establishment of a cozy State of illegal settlements—a cozy State inhabited by more than half a million settlers—expanding over Palestinian territories and enjoying the official support of the occupying Power. That occupying Power has spared no effort over the past 10 years to confiscate land, demolish homes and displace Palestinians, and has been supported by the inaction of the international community and the passive stances of influential international Powers that have the ability to stop such illegal actions.

Maintaining the status quo represents a pulling back from the objectives of the United Nations. It encourages further deterioration on the ground, the consequences of which are hard to predict. I would like to stress here that it is a false notion that what we are doing here at the United Nations is a foregone conclusion. Over a period of years, our meetings in the General Assembly on this agenda item and the resolutions we have adopted have been the only way to officially document Palestinian rights and duties within the United Nations, which should remain, with regard to any political accounting, the legal protector of the right of Palestinians to their independent State within the borders of June 1967 and with Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, our meetings in the General Assembly and our adoption of such resolutions are testimony to the fact that Arabs and Palestinians should choose the path of peace.

I would therefore like to thank all those who continue to support international legitimacy by voting in favour of United Nations resolutions and ascribe blame to all those that voted against them. I would ask the latter group the following question: If they are against the principle of maintaining Palestinian rights through

international, United Nations resolutions, what is the best way to maintain, restore and protect their rights from erosion caused by the policy of maintaining the status quo? It is clear that those parties are responsible for the delay in resolving the question of Palestine. Indeed, it is the lack of will of major international Powers that is impeding a solution. Nevertheless, this situation should not make us forget the central role of the United Nations and its bodies, nor should it cause us to deviate from the path chartered by international legitimacy and the terms of references.

In a Arria Formula meeting on 14 July 2016, members of the Security Council heard statements from people all over the world, including from the United States, Belgium and Israel itself. It was stressed once again at that meeting that the Israeli settlements were not just an obstacle to peace and to the two-State solution, but rather the core and crux of the crisis. The Palestinian cause is mainly the issue of a land that has been forcibly occupied. It is the cause of a people that has been stripped of its right to live in dignity.

Also highlighted at that meeting was something worth recognizing and valuing, namely, the Israeli voices calling for peace. Those voices are aware that it is impossible for the occupation to continue, or for coexistence to be viable, in the light of attempts to impose a status quo. It is impossible to achieve the goal of peace when laws are applied in a discriminatory manner. Those voices spoke out against the imposition of a policy of maintaining the status quo and abandoning the two-State solution. They are the voices of those who know that a people cannot live at the expense of another people. Thanks to what we heard, I am fully confident that the Israeli call within the United Nations for peace is an expression of the genuine desire of a significant, if not the largest, segment of the Israeli people. We, as Egyptians and Arabs, are resolved to cooperate with that segment of the Israeli population and will continue to work towards a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Egypt remains committed to the Arab Peace Initiative and to encouraging efforts by the international community to resume negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, particularly the efforts by France and Russia. Egypt is resolved to act bilaterally within a multilateral framework to enforce its vision for peace in the region. That vision, which was introduced 37 years ago at the conclusion of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, can still be implemented if

we garner the necessary international will and if Israel opts for a just, comprehensive peace for itself and other countries of the region.

**Ms. Danish** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President for making it possible for us to take part in today's discussion of the Palestinian question. We will always support the legitimate claim of our brothers, the Palestinian people, to recover their inalienable rights.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we recall the tragedy that has befallen them and caused their long-standing suffering. Despite the fact that the Palestinian question is the crux of the Middle East conflict and that there have been many initiatives — including the Arab Peace Initiative, which my country launched 15 years ago — the Palestinian people remain deprived of their right to live in dignity and to secure their freedom and right to self-determination.

Israel continues to be in breach of international law, pursues illegitimate and illegal policies, especially its settlement activities, violates the sanctity of holy sites and blocks peace efforts. We therefore call on the international community to dissuade Israel from carrying out such coercive policies, which defy the will of the international community and hinder efforts aimed at reaching a successful conclusion to negotiations.

*Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

My country is dedicated to a lasting peace. The success of the peace process depends upon the complete and final withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories, the fulfilment of Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. We should put an end to the tragedy endured by the Palestinian people. My country supports the efforts by the Palestinian Authority, under President Mahmoud Abbas, as well as international efforts to protect the Palestinian people, and especially to preserve the Islamic and Arab character of Jerusalem.

**Mr. Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the President for convening today's meeting, and the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the statement delivered on his behalf (see A/71/PV.49). We are also grateful to the Committee itself for its efforts.

We take this opportunity to affirm the indivisibility of Palestinian rights and to welcome the special information programme on the question of Palestine sponsored by the Department of Public Information.

The Middle East faces many challenges as a result of the increasing number of crises and conflicts in the region. Those crises and conflicts are negatively affecting the people of the region and are undermining their fundamental rights, well-being and development, with disastrous effects across the world. Stability and peace must therefore be achieved in the region by addressing the root causes of the crises, particularly the unsuccessful efforts to counter the grave violations of international law and resolutions and the failure to ensure equity and justice — a problem that must be addressed if we are to achieve a lasting, comprehensive peace by ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories.

The seven decades of occupation have proved that there can be no peace or stability in the region by imposing a *fait accompli*. We therefore welcome the initiative of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to proclaim the year 2017 as the International Year to End Israeli Occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. The initiative is based on realistic and legal grounds that would defuse the tension between the two parties.

We reaffirm our condemnation of all practices undertaken by Israel, the occupying Power, against holy sites, Islamic and Christian, in Jerusalem, as well as attempts to change the situation at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to impose restrictions on Muslims entering that site. We welcome the decision of the UNESCO Executive Board on occupied Palestine, in October, and the separate decision of the World Heritage Committee, which both proclaim Al-Quds Al-Sharif to be an integral part of a world cultural heritage site with historic value that Israel is obligated to protect.

General Assembly resolutions in that regard reflect the commitment of the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its unilateral activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, that seek to change the demographic character of the city. All of those resolutions stress the illegality of Israeli practices that seek to impose its laws and legislation on East Jerusalem. The resolutions also confirm the invalidity of the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and call on Israel to fully withdraw to the 1967 borders.

It is time to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution based on the United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the two-State solution, which seeks to create two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and within the recognized and secure 1967 borders. Israel must therefore withdraw from land occupied by Palestinians in 1967 and ensure the rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State, while reaching a just solution to the refugee crisis, pursuant to resolution 194 (III), of 11 December 1948. Negotiations must be resumed, in keeping with the relevant mandates and following a clear timetable, so as to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting solution.

The escalating violence on the ground is the result of the illegal Israeli occupation, the use of excessive force against the Palestinians and the crimes committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians with full impunity. We should therefore not be surprised that Palestinians are protesting all those measures, as they violate their rights and diminish any prospect of the establishment of their own independent State. Accordingly, the international community must provide international protection for the Palestinian people while implementing and enforcing Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 605 (1987) and 904 (1994), on the applicability to the occupied Palestinian territories of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The continued, unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip, which denies the people of Gaza their basic necessities, together with the restrictions imposed on the entry of goods and services to the Strip, has had disastrous humanitarian effects and impedes the peace process. Qatar is aware of the need to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. We will therefore continue our humanitarian efforts and work to assist in the reconstruction of the Strip. In that respect, Qatar recently inaugurated schools in the Gaza Strip named for His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, and we will continue our efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation.

The international community is currently focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the policies imposed by the occupying Power impede the ability of the Palestinian people to achieve the SDGs. According to a report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

the Palestinian economy is suffering as a result of the Israeli occupation. There should be a comprehensive, lasting and evidence-based mechanism within the United Nations system to determine the amount of those economic losses.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar renews its full support for the Palestinian people and for all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The question of Palestine, which is at the core of the situation in the Middle East, remains an issue of fundamental importance for peace in the region. The international community should have a greater sense of urgency in resolving the Palestinian question, and concrete efforts should be made to promote a just and complete solution to the issue. Such a solution is in the interests of the peoples of the Middle East, including Palestinians, and can help promote peace and stability in the world.

The Palestinian-Israeli peace talks are now deeply mired in an impasse, even as violent conflicts continue. The humanitarian situation is dire. The international community must not just let the Palestinian people suffer, nor should it allow the Middle East peace process to stall. Concerted efforts should be made to resolve the Palestinian question. China calls upon the international community to make efforts in the following ways.

First, it should adhere to the path leading towards both the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel. That should be done on the basis of the principle of land for peace, the two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community should promote the early resumption of the peace talks for real, concrete outcomes.

Secondly, the international community should urge Palestine and Israel to exercise restraint and put an end to violent conflicts. Israel should demonstrate its sincerity first by ceasing the construction of settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes in order to create conditions for the resumption of peace talks. In the meantime, attention should be given to the legitimate security concerns of the countries of the region.

Thirdly, the international community should provide a guarantee for the Middle East peace process. It should explore a broader scope for peacebuilding efforts and

develop more effective peace-promoting mechanisms for issues relating to the Middle East. The General Assembly should urge the relevant Member States to concretely implement Assembly resolutions regarding the Palestinian question. The Security Council should take swift action and actively respond to the legitimate concerns of Palestine and the Arab States.

Fourthly, the international community should press ahead with the economic reconstruction of Palestine and strengthen economic aid and support for it, in order to alleviate its humanitarian situation.

China is a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people. At the meeting commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People yesterday (see A/AC.183/PV.380), President Xi Jinping sent a message that expressed China's sympathy and support for the Palestinian people. President Xi Jinping emphasized the fact that China supports the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with full sovereignty on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as Palestine's increased participation in international affairs in its capacity as a State. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China is ready to work with the international community towards the early realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

At present, the Middle East is still experiencing wars and conflicts caused by intertwined hotspot issues and the spread of terrorism. The international community should work together for peace and stability in the region, which is in the interests of all parties.

First, the international community should respect the rights of the countries and peoples in the region to choose their own political systems and pathways of development. It should encourage parties to resolve differences through inclusive political dialogue.

Secondly, in dealing with Middle East affairs, the international community should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It should respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and observe widely recognized basic principles of international relations.

Thirdly, the international community should help the region of the Middle East improve the well-being of its people, develop a culture of tolerance, strive for

harmonious coexistence and address the root causes of regional turmoil.

Fourthly, it should enhance coordination, tackle both symptoms and root causes, apply unified standards and steadfastly crack down on regional terrorist forces in order to prevent the development and spread of terrorism.

Together with the international community, China is ready to make its contribution to finding a way out of the difficult situation in the Middle East, thus enabling the early realization of peace and development in the region.

**Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I wish to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, Ambassador Fodé Seck, for the efforts to support the rights of the Palestinian people.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Committee covering the period from October 2015 to October 2016 (A/71/35), which recounts the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, which is a cause of concern. The report has considered and specified initiatives to relaunch the peace process. Those are initiatives that we fully support in order to dispel the impasse blocking the Palestinian cause. Those initiatives would also help the Palestinian people to live in dignity and create an independent State within the pre-1967 borders, making it possible for them to live side by side with Israel in peace and security. My delegation has also taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/71/359).

The marking of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has been an opportunity for the King Mohamed VI to pledge to the Chair of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People — and through the Committee to the Palestinian people and its leadership, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas — the full and ongoing support of the Kingdom of Morocco for the historic and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to establish, within the borders of 4 June 1967, and with East Jerusalem as its capital, a viable, independent State living by side by side with Israel in peace and security and in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. His Majesty has also specified that:

“Given the obstacles that are impeding the creation of a Palestinian State, our message today — in view of the uncertain and confused international and regional situation — is that we must heighten the international community’s awareness with respect to its duty towards the Palestinian people, given Palestinians’ ongoing and increasing suffering due to the intransigence of the other party, a party which continues its settlement activities and its aggressions in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and does everything to undermine the two-State solution.”

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who chairs the Al-Quds Committee, is following with deep concern the escalation in violence and the practices adopted by Israel in Palestine, especially in Jerusalem, aimed at destroying the legal status of the holy city, as set forth in resolutions of international legitimacy, which consider Jerusalem to be an integral part of the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Those practices — including recurring acts of systematic aggression, perpetrated in the esplanades of Al-Aqsa mosque — seek to conflate the Palestinian cause with sectarian conflict and to make Jerusalem disintegrate in space and in time.

In his message, His Majesty expressed our commitment to support peace, security, equity and stability in Palestine. We will spare no effort to preserve the rights of the Palestinians in that city. We will defend the legal status of the city using political, legal and diplomatic means. We will do everything possible and use every necessary means so that the Al-Quds Fund — the right hand of the Al-Quds Committee — succeeds in realizing the socioeconomic projects to strengthen the resilience of the Palestinians, to enable them to live in dignity and to preserve the heritage of that city, which is a symbol par excellence of coexistence and tolerance.

The only way to resolve the question of Palestine is to return to the negotiating table in good faith within a specified time frame with a view to achieving the two-State solution, each living side by side in peace, security, harmony and cooperation.

Morocco maintains its principled position, based on the Arab Peace Initiative, with regard to the achievement of peace based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the borders of 4 June 1967. The

international community is therefore called on, now more than ever, to revive the peace process within a specific time frame and on the basis of international legitimacy. Morocco is more than willing to engage positively in all initiatives that will push forward the peace process with a view to reaching a settlement that will ensure security and stability in the region.

**Mr. Uddin** (Bangladesh): Bangladesh joins the international community in reaffirming its commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. Bangladesh supports the cause of an independent, viable and united Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged all concerned parties “to take a pragmatic approach and work together for the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people”.

We appreciate the Secretary General’s report (A/71/359), reflecting his abiding commitment to resuming negotiations on the Palestinian question. We believe that the new Secretary-General will also remain seized of the issue of restoring the political horizon for the negotiations to take off. We remain mindful of the Middle East Quartet’s efforts to assess the situation on the ground in order to move ahead with the peace process.

The year 2017 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. That should be an occasion for mobilizing the necessary political will of all concerned for meaningful peace initiatives. The immediate priority for the international community should be to send out a clear message on putting an end to Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. The illegal Israeli settlements have been rightly identified as the main obstacle to a two-State solution.

The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip is about to enter its tenth year. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation there remains an urgent matter of concern. We call upon the international community to impress upon Israel, the occupying Power, to halt its systematic violation of international humanitarian law and human rights principles. We reiterate that the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Quartet’s road map, the Arab Peace Plan and the principle of

land for peace remains critical to achieving a durable solution to the Palestinian question.

Bangladesh supports the Palestinian delegation's interest in playing an enhanced role in the United Nations. We shall continue to support the work of the relevant United Nations entities and committees in promoting and protecting the rights of the Palestinian people.

**Ms. Stener** (Norway): The efforts to resolve the conflict by establishing two States living side by side in peace and security remain at an impasse. We must strive to safeguard two decades of investment in building the foundations for the two-State solution. The parties need to increase their efforts to make that a reality. We know what steps are required. All unilateral actions that undermine the political process and turn hope into confrontation must stop. The expansion and legalization of settlements must stop. Violence and incitement to violence must stop.

Norway, as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, the donor group for Palestine, sees some positive signs. The Committee's meeting in New York on 19 September was the most constructive meeting in years. The Palestinian Authority and Israel reached an agreement on the electricity sector, and important progress has been made this year on fiscal issues. The two parties agreed on key infrastructure projects in Gaza.

That way forward also warrants the full cooperation of the donors. The Palestinian Authority will not be able to close the current financial gap by itself. Continued budget support is needed, also to enable reform. Norway is actively working with the parties and the donors to follow up on the results from September. When the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meets again in Brussels in the spring, we must make sure that the electricity-debt agreement has reached its implementation phase, and that the parties have made serious progress on water and energy.

The Palestinian Authority needs to reform and strengthen its political institutions and governance structures. The West Bank and Gaza need to be reintegrated into one authority that fully respects the parameters of the security agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The situation in Gaza is of great concern. Developing Gaza in an effective manner must remain

a top priority. Reconstruction must be accelerated. The volume of imported construction material, including cement, through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism needs to be increased. The entry of construction materials through other channels is undermining the efforts to address dual-use and security problems in Gaza.

The mandate and purpose of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee is to underpin such efforts to realize the two-State solution. While progress on the economic files is no substitute for a political solution, the parties must continue their cooperation in order to advance the Palestinian institutions and economy in preparation for independence.

**Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Turkey): I would like to start by extending our heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Cuba for the passing away of former President Fidel Castro, who was a legendary leader.

At the outset, let me emphasize Turkey's strong and long-standing commitment to the establishment of a peaceful, stable and democratic environment that is respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Middle East. It is unfortunate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the core challenge to attaining that goal. As the Secretary-General has said, we should reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people and working to build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

The historic injustice, continuing occupation and Israel's practices in contravention of international law, particularly the systematic expansion of settlements, erode the viability of a two-State solution. House demolitions, land confiscation, administrative detentions, denying the Palestinians' fundamental rights, and attempts to undermine the status and sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif breed desperation and anger among the Palestinians, who have been collectively punished for decades. All of those actions combined weaken the possibility of peaceful coexistence. They fuel hatred, alienation and extremism in the region.

In order to overcome the current impasse, the Palestinian people should be able to sit at the negotiating table as the State of Palestine on an equal standing with Israel. In that regard, the recognition of the State of Palestine by more countries and its full integration into international institutions are vital. To reach a just and lasting peace, it is also crucial for the Palestinians to

voice their legitimate demands in unity. In that regard, Turkey continues to encourage the Palestinian groups to move towards reconciliation and national unity.

In addition, empowering the Palestinian people and improving their living conditions through development assistance and investments is more urgent than ever. Turkey will maintain its assistance programmes, in particular those addressing the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the development needs of the West Bank.

We all agree that prospects for lasting peace are fading away. The revitalization of the peace process is essential to granting lives of dignity to the Palestinian people and to achieving stability in the region. With the Israeli occupation approaching its fiftieth year, the international community should uphold its responsibility and renew its engagement in reaching a negotiated political settlement based on the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey will not cease its efforts for a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue, with the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Mr. Bultrikov** (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the Middle East region and consistently strives for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. We are seriously concerned by the absence of real progress in the conflict, which impacts regional and international security.

In his latest report entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people" (A/71/87), the Secretary-General points out the negative trends on the ground, which according to him make the two-State solution more distant. Kazakhstan is particularly concerned about the gravity of the Palestinian situation and calls for urgent action by the international community towards its resolution in order to mitigate the suffering of Palestinians in all aspects of their existence. The blockades and checkpoints in Gaza, with little scope for economic survival, are worsening the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population, causing relations to deteriorate and diminishing prospects for peace.

The settlement process and its rapid expansion in the occupied territories not only aggravate the conflict but also militate against all peace processes, as they

have denied the Palestinian people large parts of their territories. The separation wall is an issue of contention between the two sides. We see the two-State solution, with a return to the pre-1967 borders, as the only viable option for reaching a durable peace by dialogue, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Other mechanisms and initiatives at the bilateral and multilateral levels, such as the road map for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, should be harnessed. My delegation urges the Middle East Quartet to pursue its mediation efforts, and calls on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate political responsibility towards the long-sought peace. We reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to joining the multilateral effort to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.

**Mr. Elmajerbi** (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item (A/71/359) and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the report in document A/71/35.

In order to resolve the question of Palestine, we must first end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Golan Heights. The international community has a responsibility to force the Israeli occupation authorities to comply with United Nations resolutions and to respect the historic rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their rights to return, to self-determination and to create a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Israel occupation authorities now consistently flout their obligations under international law. There is no need for us to list all of Israel's practices, which are already documented by the United Nations, civil society organizations and the media. However, we recall the war crimes committed against Gaza and in Jerusalem. The frequent and excessive use of force against women and children, the practice of isolating Palestinian communities, settlement activities, crimes committed against Palestinians, the separation wall, political assassinations, expulsions, the expropriation of land and the destruction of houses and holy places are all flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and its annexation and Judaization policies seek to erase the Arab identity from Jerusalem and are carried

out systematically and on a recurring basis. The occupation authorities pursue their violations of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and flout international resolutions, particularly those adopted by the Security Council. In this context, we commend the international community's efforts to take all necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people; to put an end to settlement activities, which are changing the situation on the ground, and to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories; and to recognize the State of Palestine as a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations.

The occupation authorities have imposed an unjust siege on the Gaza Strip since 2007. This is a form of collective punishment that threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and violates international humanitarian law. It is a siege that has had a negative impact on the daily lives of the inhabitants of Gaza, who suffer from the deterioration of infrastructure, a lack of medication and medical equipment, electricity shortages, high unemployment and a lack of drinking water, not to mention the military aggressions that have killed or wounded hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, including women, children and the elderly. The Israeli policy of expansion has not spared schools, especially those run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, resulting in the displacement of thousands.

My country condemns the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and the activities carried out by the occupation forces against Syrian civilians in the Golan in an attempt to impose an Israeli identity on its Arab inhabitants. That constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. We believe that the necessary steps should be taken to compel Israel to end its activities and comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

**Mr. Bouassila** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their comprehensive report (A/71/35) and welcome the important recommendations contained therein. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the matter (A/71/359).

The General Assembly is meeting today to discuss the Palestinian question at a time when the prospects for a political solution seem to be growing ever more remote. We must aim for a solution that recognizes

the full rights of the Palestinian people on their lands, which have been occupied since June 1967, and to establish their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We stress that the inaction of the international community and its inability to find a just solution represent an utter failure of the contemporary world order. The international community has made repeated calls for an end to the occupation, including through the General Assembly and the League of Arab States, but the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories continues. Israeli policies include the establishment of the apartheid wall, the displacement of Palestinian civilians, the imposition of collective punishment and the ongoing blockade of Gaza, whose people there are suffering the impact of recent brutal aggressions that constitute a complete violation of international law.

Israel's lack of accountability for its brutal occupation allows it to pursue its daily violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the expansion of settlements and efforts to win acceptance for them, violence by settlers, the exploitation of the natural resources of the West Bank and Gaza, the miserable state of detainees and prisoners in detention centres and administrative detentions, the excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, legislation proposing the deportation of Palestinian families and the demolition of Palestinian houses, the forced displacement of nomads and herder communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the blockade of Gaza and the paucity of reconstruction there.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we recall that the Palestinian people have the right to protection under international law and that Israel, as the occupying Power, is obliged to allow the Palestinian people to exercise that right in full. Israel's refusal to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in the Palestinian territories is a flagrant act of defiance of the will of the international community, and yet it acts without fear of punishment. Those unjust Israeli practices and continuous violations, in addition to the settlement and Judaization of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, are the main obstacle hindering the two-State solution, as stated in the recent Quartet report.

This ongoing situation and violations of the rights of the Palestinian people continue to serve as a reminder of the responsibility of the United Nations and the international community as a whole for the Palestinian

people, who have been living under occupation for more than half a century. This Day also serves as a reminder of the responsibility of the United Nations and the entire international community to provide them with the protection they deserve and to bring pressure to bear on Israel to end that occupation. My delegation welcomes the proposed designation of 2017 as the international year to end the Israeli occupation.

In conclusion, Algeria reiterates its firm and principled position in support of the Palestinian people and their just cause, and calls on the international community and the United Nations to put an end to the occupying Power's flagrant violations and to intensify their efforts to enable the Palestinian people to establish an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the territories that have been occupied since 1967.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform members that the consideration of draft resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21 will take place following the conclusion of the debate on agenda item 34.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

#### Agenda item 34

##### The situation in the Middle East

###### Reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/328, A/71/328/Add.1 and A/71/359)

###### Draft resolutions (A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22)

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22.

**Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*):** The world is witnessing many humanitarian crises, most of them in the Middle East, which has been plagued by instability for many reasons. However, we must not forget that this instability arises historically from long decades of injustice meted out to Arab peoples under a seemingly indefinite occupation. Any attempt to use the crises in the region as a pretext for diverting attention from the Israeli occupation of Arab territories is based on false claims that contravene the most basic humanitarian principles and perpetuate illegal, inhumane situations. Those situations will continue to deteriorate as long as the occupation continues, and

as long as we continue to condone the practices and violations it inflicts on people who are supposed to be able to enjoy the same rights as any other peoples in the world, especially the right to freedom, self-determination and a homeland.

In line with the international rejection of Israel's illegal occupation and practices in the occupied Arab territories, today I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, two draft resolutions under agenda item 34, "The situation in the Middle East".

Draft resolution A/71/L.22, entitled "Jerusalem", stresses that the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council are the main reference points for the issue, and that any measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws or administration on the city of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void.

The international community has expressed its grave concern about Israel's continued illegal settlement activities, including those regarding the so-called E-1 plan and its construction of a separation wall in and around East Jerusalem that isolates the city from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. In view of our desire for peace, and in order to protect Jerusalem's religious character, the draft resolution takes account of the legitimate concerns of both the Israelis and the Palestinians by emphasizing that a solution to the issue should ensure freedom of religion for all of the city's inhabitants, as well as access to the city's holy sites for people of all religions and nationalities. It also calls for respect for the historical status quo in the city, in word and practice, including in the Haram al-Sharif.

Draft resolution A/71/L.8, on the Syrian Golan, sends an important message on behalf of the international community that despite the unprecedented humanitarian crisis and conflict going on in Syria, the world must not forget that a significant part of Syria's territory is still under occupation. The draft resolution stresses the fact that despite the 35 years that have elapsed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), Israel has yet to comply with its provisions. It also stresses the fact that the Regulations annexed to the 1907 Hague Convention and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 continue to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and declares the invalidity of Israel's decision to impose its laws on the Syrian Golan and the illegality of its settlements. The draft resolution also calls on Israel to

withdraw completely from the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

The peoples of our region continue to suffer from war and aggression and look forward to achieving peace, stability and coexistence. As the resolutions of the General Assembly show, those goals cannot be achieved without serious commitment and political will on the part of Israel to fully withdrawing from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, in line with the resolutions of the Assembly and the Security Council and on the basis of the principle of land for peace and the standards of international law.

On behalf of Egypt and the sponsors, I hope that all Member States will support the draft resolutions, and I urge everyone to vote in their favour in order to demonstrate our solidarity and commitment to our international goals in upholding the noble purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

**Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt for introducing draft resolutions A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22, entitled “The Syrian Golan” and “Jerusalem”, respectively. I would also like to thank the States that have voted in favour of the resolution on the Syrian Golan in the past.

Every year, the General Assembly considers an agenda item on the situation in the Middle East, and has done so since its twenty-fifth session, in 1970. Every year, the Assembly calls on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories, emphasizing that any measure taken by Israel, the occupying Power in the Arab territories, to impose its laws and authority on Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan is unlawful, illegitimate and null and void. The Assembly’s resolutions on the subject consort perfectly with the position unanimously expressed by the Security Council in its adoption of resolution 487 (1980), on occupied Jerusalem, and resolution 497 (1981), on the Syrian Golan. They rejected the Israeli occupation’s provocative, unilateral decisions to annex Jerusalem and the Golan and considered them null and void, with no legal consequences.

We are once again debating this agenda item today, 50 years after Israel’s occupation of Arab territories and in the face of severe lethargy on the part of the international community and Israel’s violation of Palestine’s holy sites. All of that is going on while Israel is escalating its acts of aggression and settlement

activities through, for example, the proposed law on settlement regularization, which is aimed at legitimizing those colonies, and the law banning amplification of the call to prayer in Jerusalem.

Israel’s occupation of the Syrian Golan is part of that sad picture. Israel has continued to refuse to restore the Golan to Syria and to respect the resolutions of international law, particularly Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It continues to confiscate land in the occupied Golan and to pursue its settlement activities, plundering the area’s resources, distorting historical realities, looting antiquities and laying mines. It prevents Syrian citizens from pursuing educational programmes and deprives them of the right to be identified as Syrian nationals and of the right to build hospitals in their own country.

I cannot fail to mention, too, Israel’s policies of terrorism, repression, arbitrary detention, sham hearings and sentences, and ongoing aggressive, racist policies towards our brothers in the occupied Syrian Golan. We recently saw Israel’s military court sentence one young Syrian, Amal Abu Saleh, to seven years and eight months in prison, and another, Bashira Mahmoud, to 22 months because they blocked the path of an ambulance that was transporting two terrorists from the Al-Nusra Front and drove through the village of Majdal Shams in occupied Syria. Their sentences are a demonstration of Israel’s involvement with terrorist groups in Syria and its flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions related to the fight against the terrorists of Da’esh and the Al-Nusra Front.

We also remind the international community of the situation of Syria’s Mandela — the freedom fighter Sedqi Al-Maqet. He was re-arrested by the Israeli occupation forces in March 2015, after 27 years in prison in Israel’s detention centres, because he exposed Israel’s cooperation with the terrorists of the Al-Nusra Front in the area of separation. We urge that pressure be put on Israel to free without delay Sedqi Al-Maqet, Iyad Al-Johari and Amal Abu Saleh. We also call for Bashira Mahmoud’s sentence to be revoked. The Government of Syria has appealed to the Secretary-General, the Security Council and other relevant entities to help achieve that humane goal. It seems that Mr. Mladenov is not aware of the serious situation of our citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan.

Since those events in Syria began, Israel, the occupying Power, has added a new chapter to its record

of aggressions and violations of the separation of forces agreement and of Security Council resolutions, including those related to the fight against terrorism. We have seen Israel's support for armed terrorist groups in the area of separation, including the Al-Nusra Front and Da'esh, which are blacklisted by the Security Council. Israel has been in contact with both groups along the ceasefire line and has facilitated their transit and movement in the southern part of the area of separation and towards the north. Israel has clearly and blatantly provided them with logistic and medical support and enabled them to return to Syrian territory so that they can continue their terrorist activities there. That is done openly and with the knowledge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which has not lifted a finger to prevent it.

We can no longer tolerate the fact that the States Members of the United Nations cooperate routinely and in solidarity with this occupying force, particularly after the statement issued on 17 April by Israel's Head of Government at the provocative Cabinet meeting held by the occupying Power in the Golan, in which he said that "the Golan will always remain in Israel's hands [and] Israel will never withdraw from the Golan Heights". We have heard no comment, condemnation, rejection or reservation expressed by the Secretary-General, the Secretariat or the Security Council in response to such provocations.

However, the citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan are standing up to such daily declarations, which clearly and blatantly violate international law and United Nations resolutions, remaining attached to their Syrian Arab nationality and their loyalty to Syria and opposed to such practices and procedures on the part of Israel. The Syrian Golan is an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic. Syrian Arab nationality is an unchanging criterion for us, passed down from father to son. Our lands are property sacred to the children of Syria and we do not recognize any Israeli decision that aims to annex us to Israel. We categorically reject any resolutions or decisions of the Israeli Government designed to usurp our Syrian Arab identity.

Today the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that Syria's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan within the 1967 lines cannot be negotiated or bargained over. Syria's demands in the pursuit of peace are not painful concessions. The lands that have been usurped and violated must be returned

to their legitimate owners. Sooner or later, the Israeli colonizers must leave our lands in the Golan.

In that regard, the main question is, how long will Israel remain above the law, evade accountability and continue its bellicose practices? The General Assembly must take the necessary measures to contain Israel and compel it to end the occupation of the Arab territories and withdraw from them, in line with pre-1967 borders, instead of usurping that area. I call on States to support draft resolutions A/71/L.8, on the Syrian Golan, and A/71/L.22, on Jerusalem.

**Ms. AIDuraie** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its support for the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen international peace and security and his close monitoring of the situation in the Middle East. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General in documents A/71/328 and Add.1 and support all international efforts aimed at laying the foundation for regional security and stability. We will continue to take part in all efforts that seek to strengthen international peace and security.

The failed peace process in the Middle East is a major challenge for the international community. It reflects our paralysis in spite of the pressure that has been exerted on Israel for more than 60 years in an attempt to compel it to stop the settlement building and continued violations of the rights of Palestinians, who remain the target of systematic acts of aggression. My country offers its full support and solidarity to the Palestinian people so that they can achieve their aspirations to an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with 4 June 1967 borders, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We again call on the international community to compel Israel to implement Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which calls on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan. We support all measures undertaken by the fraternal Lebanese Republic aimed at preserving its stability, security, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stress the need for Israel to cease its continued violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, withdraw from all occupied territory and fully implement Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

My delegation is extremely concerned about the ongoing crisis and bloody conflict in Syria, which is now in its sixth year. We are concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, the displacement

of 13 million Syrians inside and outside of the country and the death of more than 300,000 people. Syrian refugees make up the largest refugee community in the world.

In that connection, we cannot ignore the situation in the city of Aleppo. Statistics show that the humanitarian situation continues to worsen. Two hundred and seventy-five thousand people are under siege in eastern Aleppo. That is half of those besieged in Syria, for some 582,000 people are under siege throughout the country. In that regard, once again, we condemn the deliberate targeting of all residential areas, as well as civilian and medical infrastructure across Syria, including the indiscriminate use of barrels bombs and internationally prohibited weapons. We stress the need for all perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to be brought to justice.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its support for United Nations and other international efforts to reach a political solution in Syria, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which sets a clear path to such a solution based on the first Geneva Communiqué of 2012 (S/2012/523, annex) and the Vienna statements regarding the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to a life of freedom and dignity in a way that would preserve Syria's stability, sovereignty and independence.

In that regard, in an effort to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, in 2013, 2014 and 2015 my country hosted three international donor conferences in support of humanitarian efforts there. My country has pledged \$1.3 billion, most of which has been disbursed to specialized agencies of the United Nations and other intergovernmental and non-governmental humanitarian organizations. My country also co-chaired the fourth conference of support for the humanitarian situation in Syria, which was held in London early this year.

The State of Kuwait supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, to find a solution to the crisis in Yemen in order to reach a consensus that would restore security and stability in Yemen and end the bloodshed and the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people, based on the three terms of reference — the outcome of the national dialogue, the Gulf initiative and its implementation mechanism — as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution

2216 (2015). We reiterate our rejection of all unilateral measures, including those announced by the Houthis and by the general public, to establish a Government of Salvation. We know that the Government of Yemeni President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour is the internationally recognized legitimate Government.

Kuwait reiterates its support for the security and stability of Yemen, which would preserve its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. We are committed to the Yemeni political process and seek to ensure its success in line with the Security Council resolutions. In April, Kuwait hosted the Yemeni peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that those negotiations will resume as soon as possible so that the various Yemeni parties can achieve peace and restore stability and security in that Arab country, in order to move forward on the path to development and reconstruction.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its support to the Iraqi Government. We commend Iraqi achievements in combating terrorism and Da'esh. We support all measures taken by the Government to preserve the security, stability and territorial integrity of Iraq in a way that would preserve security and safety of all sectors of the fraternal Iraqi people.

With regard to the disturbing situation in Libya, Kuwait welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and the Presidency Council to implement the Libyan Political Agreement. We hope that such an agreement will help the Libyan people preserve the security, stability and independence of their country.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, the situation in the Middle East region, the cradle of world religions and civilizations, remains tense. The clashes on the West Bank of the Jordan River, acts of terrorism and outbreaks of violence have led to the suffering of Palestinian civilians and the Israelis. The situation is worsening, with continued violations of the ceasefire around the Gaza Strip. Against the backdrop of the deteriorating situation, we see increasing radicalism among the Palestinian population, especially among youth, and extremist views are increasing on both sides. We strongly condemn any acts of violence, which whip up an already difficult atmosphere in the region and cause immense suffering to civilians, both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We are also concerned about the unilateral activities of Israel aimed at creating facts on the ground. The Israeli authorities, in spite of the stern condemnations by the international community, continue to build and expand settlements in the occupied territories, and at a rate that will enable them to reach a point of no return in the near future. We have noted with grave concern the reports that a draft bill is under consideration by the Knesset that would establish a procedure for the legalization of outlying settlements and the various facilities that have been built on private Palestinian land. The expropriation of land in the West Bank area continues, as does the destruction of Palestinian homes. We are convinced that all of those activities only undermine the realization of a two-State solution aimed at solving the Palestinian problem. The Israelis, the Palestinians and the international community all agree that there is no alternative to a two-State solution.

The conflict zone will be stabilized only if there are opportunities for a renewal of substantive talks on the basis of generally recognized international decisions. In order to overcome the deadlock in the peace process, the body approved by Security Council, namely, the Middle East Quartet of international negotiators, should be actively engaged. On 1 July the Quartet issued its report (S/2016/595, annex) on the situation with regard to the Palestine-Israel conflict settlement process, and it has become a landmark in the context of international efforts to find a Middle East settlement.

The report not only gives a real description of Palestinian-Israeli activities, but also includes concrete recommendations aimed at safeguarding the prospects for a two-State solution. We are convinced that sincere implementation by the parties of those recommendations will contribute to taking the situation out of its current deadlock and to overcoming mutual distrust. However, quite frankly, we must recognize that the provisions contained in the document are not being complied with. That is shown by our assessment of the situation in the Palestinian territories.

In the context of international efforts to find a way out of the deadlock in the Middle East peace process, Russia has been carrying out a consistent policy with all the interested parties. We support intensive contacts with participants in the conflict and with regional States. We reaffirm that the invitation proffered to President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu still remains in effect. Under the auspices of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, a meeting is

to be held in Moscow to discuss optimal ways to find a way out of the deadlock in the peace process. We note that the Palestinian and Israeli leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed their fundamental readiness to carry out such an initiative.

We call for the speedy restoration of Palestinian unity, based on the Palestine Liberation Organization's political platform and the Arab Peace Initiative. With the Palestinians working together, it will be much easier to fight for the realization of their legitimate aspirations to establish a sovereign, independent State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. We support the Palestinian leadership's quest to form a national unity Government and to hold presidential and parliamentary elections.

We are seriously concerned about the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the humanitarian situation continues to be very serious. There is not enough drinking water, there are disruptions in electricity supplies and the unemployment rate is among the highest in the world. All of that contributes to radicalization among local residents, which is being used by extremists. We agree with the view of the international community on the need to lift the blockade on Gaza.

Because of the difficult humanitarian situation faced by Palestinian refugees, the Russian Federation in November decided to provide a yearly voluntary contribution to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Next year marks 50 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which is one of the main documents whose international legal basis is generally recognized for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. Unfortunately, we have to note that, after half a century, this outmoded, chronic conflict is still far from being resolved, and the prospects for a settlement still remain vague. The relative calm of recent times in the Arab conflict should not mislead us. The situation remains tense and fraught with danger in the context of the conflagrations that are taking place in the Middle East region, which are fraught with the most serious consequences. But this anniversary of the most important Security Council decision on a Middle East settlement should and must become for us a stimulus to achieve progress in that most important area of world politics.

**Ms. Ibrahim** (Maldives): On behalf of the Republic of the Maldives, I wish to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under this agenda item (A/71/328, A/71/328/Add.1 and A.71/359) and his good offices, and for the continuing efforts to find lasting solutions to the various conflicts that still plague the Middle East.

This debate is taking place at a timely juncture with regard to the situation in the Middle East, especially at a time when the world is apprehensive over the grave humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly the escalating violence in Aleppo. The Maldives remains gravely concerned about the escalating violence and conflict in the region as a whole. The Middle East is the cradle of civilization and a centre of deep knowledge, tradition and culture, and peace in the region is crucial for its people and for the world as a whole.

Peace is both an enabler and a by-product of development, for there is no peace without development and no development without peace. The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory illustrates that reality. The Palestinian people continue to suffer under the Israeli occupation. With no end in sight to the conflict and the violence, basic necessities such as food, water, employment, working institutions and systems remain compromised. Over the past 70 years, generations have grown up in an atmosphere of hatred, fear and violence. Nonetheless, the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the incessant violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people continue unchecked.

The failure to realize the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people epitomizes the inability of the international community to work together to bring an end to the Palestinian conflict despite countless United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Oslo Accords, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, which strive to overcome the Israeli occupation and apartheid system in place. The perpetual hostility and conflict in occupied Palestine have compromised peace and security in the region for decades. A solution is necessary. The Maldives reiterates its call for the full realization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. The Maldives stands with Palestine in its quest to establish its own State alongside Israel on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Maldives notes with grave concern the events that are taking place in Syria, particularly Aleppo,

which the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs characterized as “our generation’s shame” in his briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7795). For years, we have watched the violence in Syria escalate and the death toll reach into the thousands. It is now into the hundreds of thousands, with even more people displaced and injured and nearly a million persons under siege. The Maldives is raising its voice at the United Nations, doing all it can to support the Syrian people — the Syrian men, women and children who are suffering endlessly. We call upon all parties to set politics aside and take the side of humankind.

While Syria is being destroyed, the conflict is causing an unending web of violence and destabilization in the entire Middle East region. The vacuum created in many parts of the region has led to the birth of the so-called Islamic State, which uses the Islamic religion to falsely legitimize barbaric and relentless violations of humanitarian law. The Maldives condemns attempts to attribute any terrorism to any religion, culture or tradition. We condemn any such acts committed in the name of Islam. We condemn terrorism and terrorist attacks in all their forms and dimensions.

In today’s interconnected world, the effects of conflict in the region cannot be contained, nor should they be. The international community has to step up, take action and present a united front and a unified voice against terrorism, against violence and against oppression. We cannot stress enough the importance of political compromise and the productive engagement of the international community to resolve the many conflicts in the Middle East. The Maldives looks to the United Nations and the international community to make renewed efforts for a lasting solution in a region that has been mired in strife for far too long.

**Mr. Okamura** (Japan): I thank the President for convening this important meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Palestine on the occasion of yesterday’s International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Instability in the Middle East has had repercussions beyond the region, the most prominent manifestations being the waves of refugees and migrants and the spread of violent extremism. The international community has dealt with those issues with mixed results at best. However, we must be aware that they are just symptoms of deeper issues that we should not lose sight of.

In the Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East in July (see S/PV.7736), Japan stressed that the restoration and the strengthening of governance must be promoted in order to create an inclusive and tolerant society that is resilient against extremism. Those efforts cannot be completed overnight, and the international community must be united in making such efforts.

With regard to the question of Palestine, a number of resolutions will be adopted during the current session of the General Assembly. However, we should not consider that that represents sufficient international effort to bring about a peaceful solution to the issue. Now more than ever, we need actions that have a tangible impact on the ground. With regard to Palestine, it seems that we have actually moved away from achieving a two-State solution.

Settlement activities by Israel continue in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settlement activities are in violation of international law. Japan calls upon Israel to immediately freeze such activities.

At the same time, we continue to see violence from both sides, with varying degrees of intensity. Cases of violence indicate that a one-State reality is not in the interests of either party, in view of the persisting violence and turmoil. I would like to call upon the leaders of both sides to renew their commitment to a two-State solution and to take concrete steps towards the resumption of peace negotiations.

Japan stands ready to cooperate with initiatives that will have a positive impact in promoting a two-State solution. We have also continued our own efforts to create an environment more conducive to peace negotiations. One example is the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, the flagship project of our Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. We have continuously invested in the Park, which is a medium- to long-term project to promote the sustainability of the Palestinian economy, in cooperation with Israel, Jordan and Palestine. The project is approaching its tenth year, and now we have three Palestinian companies operating and creating jobs. We envisage that in the coming years the products made in the Park will be exported through Jordan to the region and beyond. We believe that a more sustainable Palestinian economy will make the two-State solution more viable, and cooperation among the parties through the project enhances the spirit of coexistence.

Achieving a two-State solution means achieving coexistence between Israel and Palestine. In order to facilitate confidence-building between the two, Japan has been inviting future leaders in various fields from both sides to Japan since 1997. During their stay in Japan, they have a chance to engage in various activities together and exchange views. We have held that programme every year for about 20 years, and over 200 people have participated so far. I had the chance to meet with one of the participants from the Israeli side. He appreciated his experience very much and told me that before the programme he had never had a chance to talk in depth with a Palestinian. We are looking forward to again welcoming five Israelis and five Palestinians next month.

There is no easy solution to the question of Palestine, but we believe that even when the political process is stagnant, there is something that we can do to create an environment more conducive to peace. Japan stands ready to continue its efforts together with the international community.

The Middle East today is awash with issues, many of which are symptoms of deeper problems. While symptoms themselves are often quite difficult, we must keep in mind the necessity of embodying inclusiveness and coexistence in the region so as to achieve enduring peace. If the parties cannot share a hope for such a future, it is very difficult for them to sit down and negotiate.

Japan believes that governance, inclusiveness and coexistence are the keys to bringing peace to that region of great diversity. We will continue to engage in the region with that perspective in mind.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before moving on to the voting, I would like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22 will be taken after we take action on draft resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.22, which were submitted under agenda item 35.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

**Agenda item 35 (continued)****Question of Palestine****Draft resolutions (A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21)**

**The Acting President:** Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on all four draft resolutions before and after action is taken on all draft resolutions.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to inform the Assembly of an oral revision of draft resolution A/71/L.18, which the the sponsors have requested the Secretariat to announce. The document symbol in footnote 7 of this draft resolution, which reads “UNCTAD/APP/2016/1”, should read “TD/B/63/3”.

**The Acting President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/71/L.18, as orally revised, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21.

Before giving the floor to delegations in explanations of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Ms. Meitzad** (Israel): I would like to begin by speaking of the deadly fires that raged in Israel for over a week, which were put out in the past few days. As a consequence of those fires, dozens of Israeli citizens have been hospitalized and tens of thousands have been forced to evacuate their homes. Fortunately, no lives were lost in that catastrophe, but hundreds of families watched their homes disintegrate in front of them and saw the places of their precious family moments go up in smoke.

Sadly, some, including Hamas, chose that moment of tragedy to celebrate the terrible human loss and even to encourage further deliberate acts of arson. While the fires brought out such appalling and heartless behaviour, the tragedy also brought out the best in humankind. Nations from around the world came to our aid when we needed them most. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those that have already supplied

crucial help, namely, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Croatia, France, Spain, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Palestinian Authority and all other States that offered their assistance. Let me add that the sight of Israeli and Palestinian firefighters standing side by side to fight those fires is a symbol of hope for the future.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations adopted resolution 181 (II), known as the partition resolution, which recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States living side by side. While the State of Israel accepted that resolution, the Arab world rejected it and launched a war against the newly established State. Sixty-nine years later, it is shameful to see how that important date has become an annual event dedicated to bashing Israel at the United Nations, and how some countries, many of which spoke here today and yesterday, have yet to accept the existence of Israel in the Middle East and abuse this Hall to spread baseless allegations against my country.

The Assembly is convened here today to vote on a series of draft resolutions that serve those who prefer to promote a biased narrative that does not serve either side. The six draft resolutions that are being considered here today not only fail to promote dialogue or build trust, but they also create an organizational infrastructure that abuses United Nations funding to allow anti-Israel activities to take place under United Nations auspices.

At a time when the world is facing many devastating conflicts and humanitarian disasters, it is regrettable to see that the Assembly is meeting once again to adopt draft resolutions that divert precious financial resources to wasteful and politicized bodies whose only purpose is to attack Israel. Those bodies include the special information programme on the question of Palestine and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat — the only Secretariat bodies that are dedicated solely to one specific conflict, or more precisely, to the public relations activities of one side to the conflict — as well as the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which is a hotbed of anti-Israel activity.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is tasked with promoting the Palestinian political agenda at the United Nations. The Committee organizes United Nations events and international conferences specializing in presenting

false facts and half-truths and in promoting an agenda clearly directed against Israel. The Committee has also accredited a number of non-governmental organizations, some of which call for the boycott of Israel, and they do so as invited guests of the Committee at United Nations events held on United Nations premises.

That outrageous Committee is being supported by an office in the Secretariat, namely, the Division for Palestinian Rights, which runs the United Nations anti-Israel propaganda programme, mobilizing the resources of the Department of Political Affairs to promote their agenda. Such a division is unparalleled in this institution. There is no other office in the Secretariat that runs a propaganda programme against a State Member of the United Nations, and does so using United Nations resources.

As for the special information programme on the question of Palestine, that is a programme led by the Department of Public Information, which has offered a biased and misleading narrative about our region since its inception. Circulating prejudiced materials under the banner of the United Nations undermines this institution's integrity and impartiality. Hence, it is crucial to make sure that no United Nations platform is being abused in order to disseminate materials promoting anti-Israel messages, including social media platforms.

Unfortunately, the recent International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, organized by the Department of Public Information, which took place in August in Pretoria, was an unfortunate reminder of the all-too-common distortion and manipulation of information by a United Nations body. As is evident from the seminar's discussions, debates and panels, it was a completely one-sided event, presenting only the Palestinian narrative. Shamefully, some of the speakers expressed open sympathy with the the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, which is conducting a global campaign of misinformation and outright slander against Israel.

In the light of that information, it is quite baffling why the United Nations, which faces a severe budgetary deficit, would spend approximately \$6.5 million a year on those bodies, which are dedicated solely to promoting the Palestinian narrative. Those who vote in favour of these resolutions should ask themselves: Why is the United Nations giving that money to promote

a purely anti-Israel agenda instead of allocating it to those who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance?

These outrageous and wasteful resolutions are not only counterproductive, but they also become more detached from reality with each passing year. Since September 2015, terror attacks against Israelis have claimed the lives of 42 citizens and injured more than 600. Yet these draft resolutions include no mention of those victims, let alone take a stand condemning the incitement that fuelled the vile acts of terror that brought about their terrible fates.

Furthermore, the draft resolutions under discussion do not mention the internationally recognized terror organization Hamas — not even once. That is an organization that fires rockets towards Israel and builds terror tunnels, in a clear threat to the safety and security of both Israeli citizens and the population of Gaza alike.

The list can go on and on, but the bottom line is very clear: selective and biased resolutions will not bring the two sides together; it will only drive them further apart.

Another concerning element of these resolutions is the shameful refusal to use the term "Temple Mount". The Temple Mount, what we call "Har Habayit" in Hebrew, is the holiest site in the Jewish faith and a place sacred to all Abrahamic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Yet two of the draft resolutions that will be voted on here today omit any reference to the Jewish or Christian connection to the Temple Mount. That deliberate omission represents much more than just words on paper. It is a testament to the persistent refusal of the Palestinians and their supporters to recognize the historical connection of the Jewish people to that holy site and to the city of Jerusalem.

The bitter reality is that the six draft resolutions offer a one-sided account of the situation and only perpetuate a zero-sum approach to the conflict. They send a message that the only way to support the Palestinians is by criticizing Israel. That idea is in stark contradiction to the cooperation we witnessed just recently between the two sides in a time of stress. Let no one delude themselves: supporting these draft resolutions and the inherent bias against Israel at the United Nations will not advance the cause of peace; it will only make peace harder to achieve. I call on all the Members that genuinely wish to assist in achieving a durable solution for Israel and the Palestinians to

take a stand against these resolutions and take steps to facilitate direct negotiations, without preconditions, between the parties.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/71/L.18 as orally revised, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20 and A/71/L.21.

We turn first to draft resolution A/71/L.18, as orally revised, entitled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People”.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/71/L.18, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution, as orally revised: Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali and Viet Nam.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and

Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.18 as orally revised, was adopted by 100 votes to 9, with 55 abstentions (resolution 71/20).*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.19, entitled “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat”.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/71/L.19, the following countries have also become sponsors: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali and Viet Nam.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil,

Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.19 was adopted by 98 votes to 9, with 57 abstentions (resolution 71/21).*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.20, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/71/L.20, the following countries have also become sponsors: Belarus, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Mali.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates,

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Cameroon, Honduras, Nauru, Paraguay, Togo, Tonga, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.20 was adopted by 153 votes to 7, with 7 abstentions (resolution 71/22).*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.21, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/71/L.21, the following countries have also become sponsors: Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali and Vietnam.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan,

Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Australia, Cameroon, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tonga, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.21 was adopted by 153 votes to 7, with 7 abstentions (resolution 71/23).*

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to speak in explanation of vote concerning resolution 71/21, entitled “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat”.

Mexico recognizes the role that must be played by the Organization to raise awareness and support at the international level for the rights of the Palestinian people and the urgency of achieving a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine on the basis of international law and resolutions of the United Nations. Mexico nevertheless wishes to stress the importance of

making more efficient and rational use of the resources of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in carrying out its functions.

The Government of Mexico reiterates its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and its search for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so as to realize the two-State solution that permits both parties to live within secure and internationally recognized borders.

**Mr. Teo** (Singapore): I have the honour to speak in explanation of vote following the adoption of resolutions 71/20 through 71/23.

Singapore voted in favour of resolution 71/20, entitled, "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", on the understanding that the reference in paragraph 2 to the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders should be interpreted in the same manner as set out in paragraph 1 of resolution 71/23, entitled, "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", namely, de by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders.

**Mr. Galbavý** (Slovakia): I am speaking in explanation of vote on resolution 71/23, entitled, "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The EU wishes to thank the Palestinian delegation for the successful outcome of our negotiations on a number of resolutions on which action was taken by the General Assembly. As an outcome of those negotiations, the EU confirms its consolidated voting pattern on those resolutions.

At this time, we would like to place on record that, with regard to all resolutions that are adopted during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, the European Union and its member States consider that whenever the term "Palestinian Government" is mentioned, this refers to the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the use of the term "Palestine" in any of those resolutions cannot be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine, and its use is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on that issue, and hence on the question of the validity of an accession to the conventions and treaties mentioned therein. We also point out that the European Union as

a whole has not expressed a legal qualification with regard to the term "forced displacement", which is used in a number of draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 38 and 50.

Some of the resolutions adopted today also refer to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The EU is concerned about the worrying developments in that regard and the recurrent violent clashes at the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1976 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and respect to Jordan's special role. The EU stresses the need for language on the holy sites of Jerusalem to reflect their importance and historical significance for the three monotheistic religions and to respect religious and cultural sensitivities. The EU recalls that the terminology used in the resolutions does not imply a change of its sense with regard to the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif/.

**Mr. Sanabria de Montiel** (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to make an explanation of vote on resolutions 71/20 and 71/21.

The Republic of Paraguay firmly believes that dialogue and direct and good-faith negotiations between the parties are the only path to achieve a final, just and lasting peace. That is why we call for the resumption of the negotiating process and for the international community to support such efforts. The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms the need to achieve a just settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and other relevant decisions whereby two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders.

The Republic of Paraguay believes that these resolutions will not contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflict between the parties, and that is why it abstained in the voting.

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

**Agenda item 34 (continued)****Draft resolutions (A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22)**

**The Acting President:** Members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their votes on the two draft resolutions before and after action is taken on each.

We turn first to draft resolution A/71/L.8, entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/71/L.8, the following countries have become sponsors: Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.8 was adopted by 103 votes to 6, with 56 abstentions (resolution 71/24).*

**The Acting President:** We now turn to draft resolution A/71/L.22, entitled “Jerusalem”.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Nakano** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution A/71/L.22, the following countries have become sponsors: Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali and Viet Nam.

**The Acting President:** A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican

Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

*Against:*

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America

*Abstaining:*

Australia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Vanuatu

*Draft resolution A/71/L.22 was adopted by 149 votes to 7, with 8 abstentions (resolution 71/25).*

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Vieira** (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Argentina and Brazil to explain our votes.

As we have done in previous years in regard to the resolution concerning the Syrian Golan, which the

Assembly has just adopted (resolution 71/24), Brazil and Argentina voted in favour of the resolution because we believe that its fundamental nature is related to the unlawfulness of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of a State.

At the same time, I would like to clarify the position of our delegations with regard to paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not prejudice the content of that paragraph, in particular the reference to the line of 4 June 1967. Brazil and Argentina believe that it is important to advance in the search for a solution for the Israeli-Syrian track of the conflict in the Middle East in order to end the occupation of the Golan Heights. Therefore, on behalf of the Governments of Brazil and Argentina, we again stress the importance of resuming negotiations to find a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

**Mr. Erdman** (United States of America): The United States remains profoundly troubled by the submission of a disproportionate number of one-sided General Assembly resolutions designed to condemn Israel. That one-sided approach damages the prospects for peace by undermining trust between parties and the kind of international support that is critical to achieving peace. All parties to the conflict have responsibilities for ending it, and we are disappointed that United Nations Members continually single out Israel without acknowledging the responsibilities and difficult steps that must be taken on all sides. It is manifestly unjust that the United Nations, an institution founded on the idea that all nations should be treated equally, is so often used by Member States to treat Israel unequally.

The United States votes against one-sided resolutions in the General Assembly, especially those that renew the mandates of committees that use valuable United Nations resources, because we believe that they are counterproductive to the goal of achieving peace that we all share. Of these annual resolutions, three United Nations bodies in particular reflect the bias, redundancy and unnecessary cost of such resolutions: the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied

Territories. Those bodies waste limited United Nations resources, costing approximately \$6.1 million in 2015, but they do nothing to contribute to peace in the region and they perpetuate the perception of a United Nations that unfairly focuses on Israel.

The United States remains firmly committed to advancing a two-State solution. We continue to urge all sides to take steps to stop violence, improve conditions on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza, and move the diplomatic process forward. We strongly condemn all acts of violence and terrorism directed at unarmed civilians, including stabbings, shootings, arson and vehicular attacks, as well as the statements glorifying them.

The United States will support Israel's right to defend innocent civilians against terrorism, and we mourn any loss of innocent life. It is critical that every possible effort be made to show restraint and to de-escalate tensions. I would like to reiterate that the United States has consistently opposed every effort to delegitimize Israel or to undermine its security at the United Nations, and we will continue to do so with vigour.

However, our continued opposition to the resolution on Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and occupied Golan, should not be understood to mean that we support settlement activity. On the contrary, we view Israeli settlement activity as illegitimate and corrosive to the cause of peace. Israeli settlement activity threatens the viability of a two-State solution. It also moves Israel ever closer to cementing a one-State reality of perpetual occupation, which is fundamentally inconsistent with Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic State.

While the United States remains firmly opposed to Israeli settlement activity, that does not justify the repetitive and one-sided General Assembly resolutions facilitating the condemnation of Israel. Those resolutions set back our collective efforts to advance a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In addition, they damage the institutional credibility of the United Nations, which should be a concern for us all.

Such one-sided resolutions will not advance peace. Only hard choices made in the context of bilateral negotiations will do that. The cause of peace would be well served by a more balanced approach by the General Assembly to the conflict.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

**Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to the General Assembly for adopting every year since 1981, when Israel decided to annex the Syrian Golan, a resolution on the matter. We thank the Assembly for adopting resolution 71/24, as well as the other resolutions on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. My country would like to thank all the delegations that decided to co-sponsor the resolution on the Syrian Golan, as well as those who voted in favour of it.

The majority of States Members of the United Nations have continued to support the resolutions, which reflect their commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the rejection of foreign occupation and support for our full right to recover all our land occupied by Israel since 1967. The vote in favour of those resolutions sends a clear international message to Israel, namely, that the killings, the expansion, the settlement activities, the imposition of a *fait accompli* and the annexation of land by force are all rejected. Those practices run counter to international principles, including the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Therefore, all those practices will always be met with rejection by every party that seeks to uphold international law and rejects foreign occupation and the acquisition of lands taken by force.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

**Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Palestine): On behalf of the delegation of the State of Palestine, I wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all Member States that voted in favour of the important resolutions that the Assembly has just adopted and that adhere in word and deed to the legal, political and humanitarian principles and rules enshrined therein.

The General Assembly's adoption of these resolutions, once again by an overwhelming majority, is a reflection of the long-standing international consensus regarding the rights of the Palestinian people and the fundamental requirements for achieving a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, without exception. Those resolutions are also a clear reaffirmation of the international consensus on the two-State solution,

based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative — a solution that is now in grave peril owing to the violations, destructive actions and rejectionism of Israel, the occupying Power. Lastly, these resolutions answer firmly, clearly and thoroughly the false assertions, distortions and negative discourse that we have heard in this Hall from the Israeli delegation.

In conclusion, I wish to express the profound gratitude of the delegation of the State of Palestine, on behalf of the Palestinian people and their leadership, for all of the compelling expressions of support to the Palestinian people and solidarity with them and the just cause of Palestine in recent days and during the many long years. We experience despair at this ongoing injustice, as we mark yet another Day of Solidarity and as we approach the painful anniversaries of the coming year, including, inconceivably, the fiftieth year of Israel's illegal foreign occupation of our land and oppression of our people and denial of our rights. The deep despair and hopelessness among our people is increasing, yet the support and solidarity of the international community, from countries and peoples all around the world, help us to remain hopeful that we will indeed one day overcome the current injustice and realize our freedom and rights in our own independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and finally achieve peace and coexistence between Palestine and Israel, despite the fact that that

prospect seems very distant at this moment. We renew our thanks and appreciation to all delegations for their principled support.

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 34.

#### **Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** I would like to consult members regarding an extension for the work of the Second Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 48th plenary meeting, on 21 November, the General Assembly agreed to extend the work of the Second Committee to Wednesday, 30 November. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an additional extension of its work to Friday, 9 December, in view of the fact that such an extension will be needed to conclude negotiations on the draft resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly agrees to extend the work of the Second Committee until Friday, 9 December 2016?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*