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Official Records

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

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New York

Chair: Mr. Diallo (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Chair (*spoke in French*): Today, the Committee is holding a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to bid a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly; Her Excellency Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; His Excellency Sir Mark Lyall Grant, President of the Security Council; and His Excellency Mr. Palitha T.B. Kohona, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, with us today.

I welcome the representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this solemn meeting.

Allow me at this point to make a statement on behalf of the Committee.

Speaking for the first time as President of the Committee, I have the great honour to thank you for participating in this special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I also express my appreciation to all who are joining through the United Nations webcast system.

Allow me also express to the Secretary-General the sincere gratitude of the members of the Committee for his personal efforts and commitment to promoting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. His leadership on this issue is deeply appreciated by all.

I also extend a warm welcome to Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly, and sincerely thank him for honouring today's meeting with his presence. Your country, Sir, as the depository of the Geneva Conventions, has special responsibilities in this matter.

I would also like to extend a special welcome to Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in his capacity as President of the Security Council this month. The active involvement of the Security Council in the search for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in accordance with the norms of international law is vital. On behalf of the Committee, I warmly welcome his participation today and express the hope that the Council will use its full authority to seek new ways forward.

The members of the Committee welcome and support all the efforts of the Member States and Observers, the Security Council, the Quartet, the Arab

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League, the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Conference and civil society in support of our common objectives. Our solidarity also manifests itself in the daily work of the United Nations agencies and many other international and civil society organizations, which are doing everything possible to provide basic services for the Palestinians.

Sixty-three years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which changed the course of history in the Middle East and beyond. It embodied a solemn commitment by the international community to the establishment of two States in mandated Palestine. Today, that promise stands only half fulfilled. Though a Jewish State, Israel, came into being in 1948, Palestine the Arab State also supposed to be established, remains a vision yet to be realized. The question of Palestine weighs heavily on our collective consciousness as the great unfinished business of the twentieth century. Today, Palestinians and Israelis continue to pay the price for that failure.

I would like to dwell in particular on the human tragedy of the situation. For decades now, half of the Palestinians have been deprived of freedom, living under occupation in their own land. The other half have been living as refugees, with all the hardships that that status entails. The international community has a duty to restore the political and diplomatic means to give back to the Palestinians the hope of at last recovering a measure of dignity fully equal to that of all the peoples in the region.

It will be recalled that the Committee warmly welcomed the peace process launched in 1991 as a guarantee of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State while simultaneously providing Israel with recognition, peace and security, pursuant to the recommendations of the Quartet Road Map. We called on the parties to refrain from taking destabilizing unilateral actions on the ground, including the building of new or the expansion of existing settlements.

Unfortunately, it appears that Israel has not been able to assume this undertaking, which is recognized by the entire international community as a minimal confidence-building measure. It is therefore not difficult to understand the Palestinian Authority's frustration and reluctance to negotiate in such circumstances.

The General Assembly has reaffirmed that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with

respect to the question of Palestine until the matter is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory way, in accordance with international law. Not only must the General Assembly continue to promote the guidelines required for the parties to commit themselves in good faith to that end, but Member States must individually and collectively demonstrate their active solidarity and take immediate action to improve the lives of the Palestinian people.

An urgent first step is to lift the blockade that has unfairly weighed on the civilian population of Gaza for over three years. The second step is to require all relevant international bodies to combat impunity, particularly during military operations in the Palestinian territory, and to ensure that the status of East Jerusalem and the holy sites is respected. Israel must also be called on to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law. Lastly, we must demonstrate our solidarity with Palestine by giving our strong support to the Fayyad plan, which must be implemented if a Palestinian State is to be viable. We must do everything to ensure that the plan is funded.

Let me assure all present that the Committee will continue to fulfil the mandate given to it by the General Assembly until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized. This goes hand in hand with the final settlement of the conflict through the emergence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss.

Mr. Deiss, President of the General Assembly: On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Chair and Vice-Chairs for the invitation to address this meeting today.

We meet to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, as we have done every year since 1978. The date of 29 November was chosen because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people. On this day in 1947, as you just mentioned, Sir, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the territory known as Mandate Palestine into two States — one Jewish and one Arab.

However, as we are all sadly aware, the resolution did not translate into a just and lasting solution. We continue therefore to observe this day in order to show our enduring commitment and solidarity to the peoples of the region. And by doing so, we also reaffirm the permanent responsibility of the United Nations to remain seized of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects.

In this regard, I commend you, Mr. Chair, for what you and your Committee have done to remind us of this shared responsibility. I also commend and pay tribute to the United Nations in general, and in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as non-governmental organizations and civil society, for their invaluable efforts on the ground. I encourage all Member States to continue to support their efforts.

Violence, human suffering and mistrust have dominated Palestinian-Israeli relations for far too long. How shall we explain to the coming generations our inability over the course of 63 years to end the dramatic situation inflicted on the peoples of the region? If we want to move forward, we must restore hope and a sense of positive direction to the peoples of the region.

Now more than ever, the parties must step up their efforts to engage each other in honest negotiations and overcome deadlocks. Violence and acts of terror must cease. International law and United Nations resolutions must be respected, and actions that could aggravate the situation and increase suspicion and mistrust must be stopped. Now is the time for peace. Everything must be done to alleviate the daily suffering of the Palestinian people. Access and mobility are crucial for dealing with unemployment and poverty.

We, the international community, must also intensify our engagement in helping the parties to end a conflict that for far too long has tormented the region and its peoples. We must spare no effort to assist both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to decades of confrontation, conflict and violence. This is in the interest of the parties, in the interest of the region, and in the interest of international peace and security. Let us therefore reaffirm our commitment to the Middle East peace process and continue to mobilize international assistance for the Palestinian people.

They deserve a life of dignity and a future of peace and security.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for his important statement.

I now have the privilege of giving the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I would like to commend the Committee for its enduring dedication to bringing the question of Palestine to the forefront of international attention and for pursuing its important General Assembly mandate.

I bring greetings from the Secretary-General, on whose behalf I am pleased to deliver the following message.

“Every year on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we reflect on the situation of the Palestinians and consider what more we can do for peace.

“Two timelines will reach a critical point in 2011. First, Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu have pledged to seek a framework agreement on permanent status by September. Secondly, the Palestinian Authority is on track to complete its two-year agenda of readiness for statehood by August.

“At its meeting in September 2010, the Quartet stated that an agreement can be reached in the time frame set out by the leaders themselves, and that the Palestinian Authority, if it maintains its current performance in institution-building and the delivery of public services, is well-positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future.

“Yet few Palestinians are optimistic that anything decisive will be achieved next year, or even at all. Looking at the situation on the ground, I understand this despair. Soon after direct talks on final status began in September, they were undermined by the expiry of Israel’s commendable settlement moratorium. The construction of hundreds of new units throughout the West Bank commenced, and new approvals for settlements in East Jerusalem were given. This development is a serious blow to the

credibility of the political process. The obligation remains on Israel to meet its responsibilities under international law and the Road Map to freeze settlement activity.

“It is also true that few Israelis seem hopeful that peace can be achieved soon, and I am sensitive to Israel’s security concerns. But I ask all Israelis to look with fresh eyes at the indisputable emergence of a reliable security partner on the ground, and the continued commitment of President Abbas to Israel’s right to live in peace and security and to his rejection of violence and terrorism. I also remind everyone of the promise of the Arab Peace Initiative that a two-State solution and comprehensive Israeli-Arab peace would be followed by the establishment of normal relations between Israel and all Arab States.

“I commend the steps taken during the past year to improve conditions on the ground. However, much more is needed. The Palestinian Authority must continue to roll out the institutions of statehood, combat terrorist attacks and curb incitement. Meanwhile, it is both in Israel’s interest and its duty to begin rolling back the measures of occupation, particularly with respect to movement, access and security actions.

“I remain very concerned about conditions in Gaza. I express appreciation for the modification of Israel’s policy and the approval of a substantial number of United Nations projects. But this can only be a first step. The full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) should follow. Israel needs to enable broader civilian reconstruction, free movement of persons and the export of goods, and to facilitate the swift implementation of projects. Rocket fire from Gaza must stop. A prisoner exchange, the extension of de facto calm and progress on Palestinian reconciliation are also key steps.

“An overwhelming international consensus exists on the need to end the occupation that began in 1967, address the fundamental security concerns of both parties, find a solution to the refugee issue and see Jerusalem emerge from negotiation as the capital of two States. I challenge the two leaders to show statesmanship and political courage in reaching a historic peace.

The international community, for its part, must be ready to assume its own responsibilities for peace.

“Let the year ahead be the one in which we realize, finally, a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. I will do everything in my power to support these efforts.”

That concludes the message of the Secretary-General. Let me reiterate my own support for this work.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): Despite her busy schedule, the Deputy Secretary-General was willing to come and participate in this special meeting, and we thank her for that. Through her, I would like to express the Committee’s sincere gratitude for the important message from the Secretary-General, and ask her to convey to him our support in his continued personal efforts to promote a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Sir Mark Lyall Grant.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom), President of the Security Council: I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council for November.

We are here to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In June 2009, the Quartet affirmed its determination to actively and vigorously seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreements previously reached between the parties.

The Security Council remains fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with mutually agreed and recognized borders.

In September, the Quartet reaffirmed its full commitment to its previous statements, which provide that negotiations should lead to an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

Throughout the past year, the Council has continued to receive regular briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Department of Political Affairs and to hold open debates. These meetings have covered a range of issues and opinions.

First, Council members have underscored that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an agreement negotiated between the parties, and re-emphasized that only a two-State solution with an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours can bring peace to the region.

Secondly, Council members have urged the parties to avoid any unilateral and provocative actions, and have called on all international partners to promote an atmosphere of cooperation between the parties and throughout the region. As the Quartet has said, unilateral actions by either party, including settlement activity, cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.

Thirdly, transformative change on the ground is integral to peace. Council members have welcomed the Palestinian Authority's State-building plan, which demonstrates the Palestinian Authority's commitment to an independent State that provides opportunity, justice and security to the Palestinian people and is a responsible neighbour to all States in the region.

Fourthly, Council members continue to view the situation in Gaza with concern. In June 2010, the Council agreed on a statement (S/PRST/2010/9) following the tragic Gaza flotilla incident, which stressed that the situation in Gaza was not sustainable. We emphasize the importance of full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), and in that context stress the need for a sustained and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza, as well as unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza.

As the Quartet reaffirmed in September 2010, the current situation in Gaza is not in the interests of Palestinians or Israelis. The Quartet welcomed the shift in Israel's Gaza policy since June 2010 and called for further efforts by all concerned to ensure the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza and to address Israel's legitimate security concerns.

Finally, all Council members have commended the laudable efforts of humanitarian organization and agencies on the ground, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its staff. We encourage all members of the international community to support the Agency with financial contributions.

Looking ahead, the Security Council will remain seized of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and will continue to consider the issue on a regular basis.

In conclusion, allow me to assure all Member States of the commitment of the Security Council to the ultimate goal of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent and democratic State.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Lyall Grant, for his important statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): It gives me great pleasure and it is an honour to deliver to this morning's gathering, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the statement of President Mahmoud Abbas. The message reads as follows:

(*spoke in Arabic*)

"As the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People commemorates the International Day of

Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am pleased to convey the warmest greetings of the Palestinian people and their leadership to the Committee and the international community. We are profoundly grateful for the Committee's solidarity with our people and its support for their struggle to realize their inalienable rights and to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East region.

"I also wish to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair, Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for their efforts to restore the rights of the Palestinian people, bring an end to their suffering and achieve peace in the region. Their all-important role has clearly and effectively contributed to the promotion of international solidarity with our cause and to broad support for the noble aspirations of our people to self-determination, freedom and independence.

"Since its inception, the United Nations has continued to address and shoulder its responsibilities towards the question of Palestine. It has done so with a view to resolving the issue in all its aspects by putting an end to the Israeli occupation of our land and our holy places, thereby allowing our people to determine their destiny in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the consensus of the entire world. It has adopted numerous resolutions based on the Charter of the United Nations and on international law, including international humanitarian law.

"Although those resolutions have not yet been implemented owing to Israel's refusal and intransigence, they remain valid and still constitute the foundation for the protection of the rights of our people and the basis for achieving justice, which is the prerequisite for achieving peace. We recall here that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) constitute the basis for the entire peace process in the Middle East.

"A reality that cannot be ignored or denied is the historical and ongoing injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people. Another reality is that the

Palestine Liberation Organization has for many long years engaged in our struggle with a considerable sense of realism. Since 1974, our national councils have acknowledged the principle of resolving the conflict on the basis of two States and through negotiations. Our people declared the independence of the State of Palestine as a peace initiative in 1988, in which we made a historic, painful concession so as to achieve a peace that would guarantee our rights through the establishment of a Palestinian State based on the 4 June 1967 borders in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

"But the basis for progress towards a peaceful settlement is the principle of partnership and agreement on the legal terms of reference and on commitment to agreements reached with a view to solving the problems imposed by the legacy of this long, bitter and bloody conflict. This partnership must be one in which each party understands the legitimate concerns of the other. It must be a partnership that lays the foundations for a new and different future for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

"I must stress here that the Palestinian partner will continue to be a real partner, not to whitewash the ugly face of the occupation but to bring an end to that occupation. Moreover, negotiations must be fair and lead to a clear and binding agreement. That does not mean that the powerful party, Israel, should be permitted to consistently impose its will on us. We have a strong and firm commitment to achieving a comprehensive agreement that leads to two viable States based on the borders of 4 June 1967 — one being Israel, which already exists, and the other, the State of Palestine, which must achieve its independence.

"In that framework and based on our determination to achieve peace, we have responded to the efforts and initiatives of the United States and the international community seeking a resumption of the peace process and of negotiations between us and Israel following a period of stalemate. With the help of many Arab and international parties, we were able to break the deadlock that plagued the process.

“We had hoped that the removal of the obstacles to the resumption of negotiations on final status issues and a permanent settlement would mark a serious and true beginning towards achieving genuine and lasting peace and security between us and Israel. For that to happen, efforts must be made to address the deterioration in the peace process, create an enabling atmosphere and build bridges of trust between the two sides.

“That can be accomplished only through respect for the terms of reference of the peace process, as defined in the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, the vision of two States and the strict and honest implementation of the signed agreements. That, in turn, requires bringing a decisive and final end to the vicious Israeli colonial settlement campaign in all the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The settlement campaign is a time bomb that could at any moment destroy everything we have accomplished on the road to peace.

“The seizure of land, the expulsion of Palestinian citizens from their homes and the construction of the annexation apartheid wall, which has been internationally condemned, must be ceased. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails must be released.

“The unjust and inhumane siege imposed on our people in the Gaza Strip must be lifted. The illegal transfer of Israeli civilians to the occupied Palestinian territories, including Holy Jerusalem, must be halted, because settlement activities cannot coexist with peace. Settlements are a flagrant and aggressive manifestation of the occupation and the mentality of expansion, while peace means recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people and a commitment to implementing resolutions of international legitimacy in both letter and spirit, the principle of land for peace, the vision of the two-State solution and the Road Map.

“There is no way to attain a real, lasting and comprehensive peace if such a peace is not based on resolutions of international legitimacy that call on Israel to withdraw completely from all the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. The alternative is to slip further into the

unknown. A commitment to negotiations and to the obligation of ensuring a just and lasting peace must be reaffirmed. That is required by the demands of justice and international law; that is what will bring peace, not the so-called economic peace or practical considerations that are based on what can be accepted by the occupying Power, the pre-acceptance of which has undermined the peace process and the prospects for security and stability in the region.

“To extinguish the fire of violence and to control extremist tendencies, a brave step must be taken towards final status negotiations so as to reach practical and fair agreements that would end the occupation of our land and our holy places and provide firm stability for the region, which is replete with tensions that give rise to both overt and less obvious outbreaks. That is why we strongly reject all unilateral actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and demand their immediate cessation, because they affect the final status issues and represent a clear attempt to unilaterally determine the final status map.

“I address my words, through you, to the entire international community. We must draw lessons from the results of past failures of international efforts to compel Israel to end its settlement policies and aggressive practices, which have caused so much damage and undermined the credibility of the peace process in the eyes of our people. The core of the conflict is the occupation and the settlement activities, and it is time for the world to address the roots of this conflict by ending the occupation and allowing for the achievement of an independent State of Palestine, which we hope, as President Obama stated in the General Assembly last September, will become a new, active and recognized Member of the United Nations in the next year. I wish to assure you all that the United Nations and international legitimacy will remain the reference and resort for us in terms of taking any decisions in the event that negotiations fail, although we are determined to make every effort to ensure their success.

“The Palestinian people draw their unwavering faith from the justness of their cause and from your support and the support and solidarity of all brothers and friends who wish to

see the peace process succeed. We thus need your continued efforts and those of the co-sponsors of the peace process, including President Barack Obama, the Russian Federation, the European Union, Japan, China, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and our Arab brothers and friends everywhere, in particular here at the United Nations.

“I am completely confident, as we are on the threshold of celebrating a new year, that the suffering of our people is coming to an end. I am also sure that the renewal and the confirmation of your solidarity and support for our people, especially at this time, will bolster our steadfastness, as you will support our just position and our sincere efforts to establish a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region — a peace that will last and will be consolidated and entrenched; a peace based on justice, rights, equality, mutual respect and creative cooperation; a peace that guarantees all the peoples of the region security, stability and prosperity as well as freedom and independence for the Palestinian people; a peace that will turn the page on the past with all its agonies, pain, repression and suffering; a peace that will herald a new era of cooperation and coexistence in the region, with hope, security and prospects for a better future for all our children.

“We reiterate to all of you our gratitude and appreciation for your determined efforts and your firm and constant solidarity with the cause of our people. I reiterate also to the Israeli people that our hand is still capable of plucking the dry olive branch from the rubble and will remain outstretched in the quest for a just peace in order to secure a safe future for our children and their children.”

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to ask you to convey our sincere thanks and greetings to Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority for his important message.

On behalf of us all, I convey to President Abbas our solidarity with the Palestinian people and our

unwavering support for its aspirations in their quest for self-determination and statehood.

I should also like to assure President Abbas and, through him, the Palestinian people of our Committee's firm commitment to continuing its efforts, as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

I shall now suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow some of our guests to leave the Conference Room. On behalf of the Committee, I should like once again to thank the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council for their contribution to this important meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.10 a.m.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Palitha Kohona, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories: I have the honour to address this meeting as the Chairman of the General Assembly-mandated Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, as it commemorates the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This day provides a critical reminder to the international community of the urgent need to finally resolve the Palestinian question in a just and equitable manner.

I am saddened to address the Committee at a time when the situation for the occupied Palestinian people remains dire. Despite well-intentioned efforts to revive the peace talks this year, the facts on the ground reveal that prospects for the achievement of their fundamental right to self-determination are as distant and elusive as ever. Ongoing confiscation of land, settlement and housing expansion and the construction of the wall are severely undermining prospects for the attainment of Palestinian Statehood.

Policies and practices emanating from the current regime of occupation continue to infringe on a whole spectrum of rights. Consequently, a significant proportion of the occupied population lives in poverty, many of them totally dependent on humanitarian aid. Levels of poverty are particularly high in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli-imposed blockade, as well as in area C of the West Bank due to restrictive access and discriminatory planning. Furthermore, we are deeply concerned by the ongoing loss of life and injuries in conflict-related violence. Moreover, over 6,200 Palestinian prisoners remain in detention, while allegations of torture and ill treatment have been made.

Earlier this month, the Special Committee presented its forty-second report (see A/65/327) on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and occupied Syrian Golan. Our report concluded that an unacceptable culture of impunity prevails, leading to the repetition of violations that are highlighted year after year by our Committee and many others. As a key means to address the long-standing pattern of systematic human rights violations, the Special Committee calls for diplomatic efforts to be intensified with a view to adopting appropriate measures to require Israel's compliance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian question and with international humanitarian and human rights law. It is only through a political solution with human rights at its heart that Palestinians and Israelis will begin to enjoy human security and peace and live as neighbours.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Palitha Kohona, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, for his important statement.

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations, who will read out a message from the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Hosni Mubarak, in his capacity as current President of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to read out the text of a message from His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt:

“On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the pleasure to write to the Committee to reaffirm the full support of Egypt and the Non-Aligned Movement for the brotherly Palestinian people in their legitimate quest to restore and exercise all their inalienable rights, primary among which is their legitimate right to establish an independent and sovereign State of their own, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of all relevant terms of reference and in accordance with the rules and provisions of international law, international humanitarian law, the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the principles of Madrid Conference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

“Despite the fact that 63 years have elapsed since the partition resolution, the suffering of the Palestinian people still goes on, requiring this Committee's continued efforts to put an end to that suffering by ending the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and calling a halt to Israeli practices and violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. Those practices and violations include an unlawful and oppressive Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip which has resulted in an unprecedented deterioration of Palestinian living conditions.

“Israel's failure to meet its commitments as an occupying Power, its continued settlement policy and alteration of the situation on the ground, the expropriation of Palestinian land and property, the attempt to change the features of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, assaults on the sanctity of the holy places and those who frequent them, in particular, the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, the continued building of the separation wall and other practices that are against the rules of international law and international humanitarian law constitute flagrant violations of human rights, one such violation being the recent decision concerning the oath of allegiance to the Jewish character of the State, which is a clear violation of the rights of Israeli Palestinian Arabs and an obvious attempt to expel them from Israeli territory.

“Egypt and the Non-Aligned Movement highly appreciate the efforts of this Committee towards bringing about a Palestinian State, as

well as its support for the Palestinian people's recovery of their inalienable legitimate rights, with a view towards a just settlement of the Palestinian question as an inseparable part of the overall solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and as one of the prerequisites for stability in the Middle East region.

"It is our view that the defining features of a definitive solution are known to all, including the parties to the conflict themselves. What is needed now is genuine will for peace on the part of Israel, inasmuch as everyone has understood the seriousness of the Palestinian Authority and its commitment to the peace process, while Israel's actions bespeak its insistence on prevarication and stripping the political process of its content. That requires action on the part of the international community, which must shoulder its responsibilities in pooling all the efforts of the parties in the international arena to ensure the resumption of the negotiation process based on the clear terms of reference within a definite time frame and on the necessary sound bases, the first of which is the total and unconditional cessation of settlement activity and all the Israeli policies that thwart the achievement of the desired peace.

"At the same time that I express to the Committee my praise and that of the Non-Aligned Movement for its efforts during the past year and reiterate Egypt's firm commitment to continued efforts towards the achievement of Palestinian national reconciliation and a just and comprehensive peace, let me reaffirm our full backing for the Committee's activities aimed at mobilizing the requisite international support for the Palestinian people's recovery and exercise of its inalienable rights and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"I would ask that the Committee accept the assurances of my highest consideration, together with my best wishes to it and its members for continued success."

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz for the important message from His Excellency Mr. Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. I request

Ambassador Abdelaziz to kindly convey to President Mubarak the sincere thanks of the Committee for his very important message.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin M. Aslov, Permanent Representative of the Tajikistan to the United Nations, who will read out a statement from His Excellency Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, in his capacity as Chairman of the thirty-seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to read out the message of His Excellency Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan and Chairman of the thirty-seventh session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo.

"I have the honour to express to you, Mr. Chairman, as head of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, my profound gratitude for having organized this special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

"On 29 November 1947, General Assembly resolution 181 (II) was adopted on the establishment of two States on the Territory of Palestine. Pursuant to that resolution, to date only one State has been established. The hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people for the establishment of their own State remain unrealized.

"A few months ago, the thirty-seventh session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the countries members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference took place in the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe. A number of resolutions on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, were adopted. Those resolutions demand the lifting of the blockade and call for brotherly material assistance for the reconstruction of Gaza.

“More than 1.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip under the conditions of the blockade suffer from a shortage of food, electricity, medicines and building materials. They look to the international community to take concrete steps to put an end to their tragedy and great suffering.

“Here, I would like to draw attention to two important issues — the building of settlements and East Jerusalem, on which an absolute majority of the international community agrees. The international community acknowledges that the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem is unlawful under international law and runs counter to Israel’s obligations under the Road Map. All settlement activities, including natural growth, must be ended. Building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories clearly increases tension, creates insurmountable obstacles to achieving peace between the Israelis and Palestinians and undermines efforts to establish a Palestinian State.

“All Israeli measures that change the status of the city or seek to change its status have no legal basis or legitimacy in international law. The status of East Jerusalem was clearly defined in many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and Israel should abide by them. We support the establishment of two States, which would provide for the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

“That is the only possible solution by which the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people can be realized. It will also bring peace and security to the people of Israel and provide a major impetus to development and economic cooperation in the Middle East region. In that context, the international community should implement all relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories occupied in 1967 and on ensuring the right of return and guaranteeing the rights of refugees from the occupied territories, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

“I would like once again to address to the international community from this rostrum to call on it to assume its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and to make serious efforts to ensure the implementation of international treaties and agreements. We highly value the work of the Committee and call on it to continue to support the Palestinian people in their just struggle for the liberation of their occupied territories and the exercise of their inalienable rights, including the right of return to their homes.”

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank His Excellency Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov and request him to convey to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, in his capacity as Chairman of the thirty-seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, the sincere thanks of the Committee for his important message.

In the absence of the representative of the Acting Chairperson of the African Union, I have the pleasure of giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Oumar Daou, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mali, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Group for this month.

Mr. Daou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): We are gathered here today to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On behalf of the African Group, I would like to echo previous speakers in order to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for having organized this event. This day gives us the opportunity to reaffirm once again our active solidarity with the Palestinian people, who have suffered a tragedy for more than 60 years owing to the Israeli occupation. The situation in the Middle East is of great concern to the international community. Therefore, need we recall here that if there is one issue that unites all in resentment in that part of the world, it is clearly the Palestinian question?

As the United Nations and the international community commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, our thoughts turn to the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories, in particular those in Gaza, who live in a very critical socio-economic and humanitarian situation, specifically owing to the blockade imposed by the Israeli authorities and the harmful consequences

of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009.

Our thoughts are also with the millions of Palestinian refugees living in the occupied Palestinian territory and in neighbouring countries. Their situation remains an issue of serious concern to the international community. I should like to pay warm tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its remarkable work on the ground to provide the necessary assistance to Palestinian refugees and to those in particularly difficult situations, specifically given the many restrictions imposed on its staff and the harassment and intimidation that they suffer daily. At the same time, we commend the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations working on the ground.

Settling the Palestinian question cannot be postponed indefinitely. For a long time now, a negotiated solution has been defined that includes the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within recognized borders, living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel. It is therefore time to work to bring about this lofty objective. It is important in that respect to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Organization, advocating in particular the lifting of the embargo against Gaza and the relaunching of negotiations with a view to bringing about a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Sustained diplomatic efforts must also be made in order to bring all the parties to the negotiating table. In parallel, Israel must commit to dismantling settlements and ceasing all of its activities relating to the establishment of new settlements. Israel must also commit to removing the blockade imposed on Gaza and to creating conditions that are conducive to the relaunching of the negotiations.

Along the road to this just and comprehensive peace which we so strongly desire, Africa reaffirms its unwavering support for the initiatives of the United Nations, the Quartet, the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and other international organizations.

I should like, on this momentous day, to underline that it is high time that the courageous Palestinian people recovered all their national rights,

including their right to a sovereign and independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The African Group, for its part, will spare no effort in contributing to the quest for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, which is at the heart of the situation in the Middle East.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): The Committee greatly appreciates the message just delivered on behalf of the African Group.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, who will read out a message from the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Amre Moussa.

Mr. Mahmassani (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. Chairman, I should like at the outset to read out to the members of the Committee a message of congratulations and appreciation from the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Mr. Amre Moussa.

“I should like to convey my greetings and gratitude for the efforts made by the Committee in support of and in solidarity with the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination.

“The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an integral part of the efforts to address the dangerous situation that threatens the peace process and impedes the two-State solution, as it prevents the establishment of a sovereign Arab Palestinian State and hinders a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

“It is clear that Israel’s policy of colonization and settlements and its efforts to make Israel a Jewish State create difficulties and obstacles to the resumption of serious negotiations that would address all aspects of the final status issues on the basis of international legitimacy and in accordance with the terms of reference set out in a specific timetable. Occupied Palestinian lands, including East Jerusalem, are governed by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant provisions of international law on foreign occupation. The unilateral measures taken by Israel are null and void; they produce no rights and no commitments.

“We call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to shoulder their responsibilities and to ensure the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions with regard to the peace process and to negotiations. The core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the occupation of Arab territories. A just and comprehensive peace with Israel can be realized only through the full withdrawal by Israel from those territories to the 1967 borders, including the occupied Arab Syrian Golan Heights and the territories that are still occupied in southern Lebanon, the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and reciprocal commitments as proposed in the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

“We call upon the international community to immediately take the measures necessary to put an end to Israel’s inhumane and unjust siege of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Government is responsible for freezing the direct negotiations launched by President Obama in Washington in September 2010. Its persistence in illegal settlement policies has had dangerous, negative consequences and impacts.

“Resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel requires a complete freeze on and stoppage of all settlement activities in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel has defied and disregarded international legality and world public opinion and violated human rights instruments. The international community must realized that resolving the Palestinian question is the key to peace and stability in the region, which is necessary for the benefit of all peoples that have long suffered from war, and to finding a lasting and just solution to the conflict, which has lasted for decades. Continued Israeli occupation would destabilize the region and increase tensions. This is a very dangerous situation for international peace and security.

“The Ministerial Committee of the Arab Peace Initiative has responded favourably to the efforts made by President Obama to relaunch the negotiation process. The ministerial meeting held on 29 July 2010 sent a message to the authorities of the United States with regard to the

requirements for the relaunching of serious and meaningful negotiations.

“Those efforts and the favourable reaction of the Arab, and in particular the Palestinian, people have come up against the attitude of Israel, which constantly and categorically rejects all initiatives and proposals that could lead to a balanced settlement. The Arab League greatly appreciates the position that President Obama took vis-à-vis the rights of the Palestinian people in the statement he made before the General Assembly on 23 September 2010. The League of Arab States, as always, stands ready to cooperate with the United States Administration to ensure the implementation of what was set out in that speech. We call upon the United States to continue its efforts to create favourable conditions, in particular to put an end to colonialist settlements, so that the peace process can be allowed to proceed on the right track.”

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mahmassani for his statement, and I would ask him to transmit to His Excellency Amre Moussa our sincere thanks for his important message.

I now give the floor to Ms. Judith LeBlanc, member of the Steering Committee of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, who will make a statement on behalf of civil society organizations actively seeking the resolution of the question of Palestine.

Ms. LeBlanc (US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation): It is an honour to address the special meeting today. I have attended these important United Nations events in the past. The first time was just after my return from participating in a peace delegation to the West Bank during the second intifada. Upon my return, I went on a national tour, speaking at community centres, churches, synagogues and mosques. It is with sadness that I say that I could give nearly the same speech today as then about the cruel, inhumane realities of the Israeli occupation and the stalled political negotiations.

As a member of the National Steering Committee of the US Campaign to End the Occupation and an organizer for Peace Action, the largest peace organization in the United States, I am mindful of the opportunities and challenges we face in a world where

many conflicts, inequalities and pressures to undermine international institutions and law.

The International Day of Solidarity is a moment to examine the opportunities and challenges in the fight for the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions including the right of return and return to the 1967 borders, for the economic and social rights for Palestinian refugees, and against United States military aid to the Israeli occupation.

To paraphrase Richard Falk, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights on Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, the daunting challenge we confront is the prolonged occupation combined with the expansion of the settlements, which now amounts to de facto annexation.

The prospects for a comprehensive and just peace are precarious at a moment when there is a growing consensus in support of the two-State solution. The only path forward is negotiations based on international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

No great social change, resolution of international crisis or just solution has happened without civil society being engaged and organized for justice. The opportunity and challenge we have as civil society organizations today is to mobilize international public opinion to help break the deadlock of more than 60 years of occupation. The tactics of non-violent direct action, boycotts, divestment and sanctions are best when aimed at solidifying public opinion in support of the implementation of United Nations resolutions and international law. In this, the public opinion in the United States is decisive.

The Israeli military action on the Gaza freedom flotilla ignited a groundswell of international solidarity, indignation and debate. As a result, the international movement in support of the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions issued by Palestinian civil society continues to grow. But United States public opinion and official policy remain the biggest barriers to effecting change in the conflict. Organizing to shift and solidify public opinion in the United States for effective political pressure on the Obama Administration and Congress is critical.

Recent United States public opinion polls show that pluralities know the ongoing illegal Israeli

settlements in occupied land are wrong and should be stopped. They support President Obama's efforts, but a majority of Americans still do not understand the history of and issues surrounding the conflict, or the role that the United States plays in supporting the Israeli regime.

Most do not understand that Israel ignores the United Nations and international law because the United States Government has poured over \$3 trillion into Israel's economy, plus \$3 billion in annual military aid, and has used over 48 Security Council vetoes to protect Israel from international condemnation.

The recent United States midterm elections compound the complexity for solidarity organizing here in the United States. Now, two thirds of registered Democrats are opposed to Israeli policies, as compared to two thirds of registered Republicans who support Israeli policy at all costs. This is not new; it existed under the Clinton and Bush Administrations. The divide, though, has deepened with President Obama's support for a freeze on settlements.

The United States solidarity movement must develop tactics that engage the new level of concern about United States policy in the Middle East while at the same time educate on what in fact the United States must do differently to break the impasse in the region. Many had hoped that the election of President Obama would represent a break in the continuum of United States foreign policy towards Israel. The reality is that the United States continues to interfere with the United Nations Charter-mandated diplomatic role of the United Nations and the implementation of United Nations resolutions, such as that on the Goldstone report (resolution 64/10), all due to politically driven domestic pressures.

The most recent example is the United States promise to turn over \$3 billion in stealth fighters to Israel and to veto any United Nations resolution that questions Israel's legitimacy, in exchange for Israel's pledge to extend a 10-month partial settlement moratorium for another 90 days. The cold reality is that the powerful, moneyed, pro-Israel lobby remains one of the strongest influences on United States foreign policy.

On this International Day of Solidarity, we must recommit to organizing civil society. The powerful pro-Israel lobby's influence on United States policy will only be challenged by internationally organized

and sustained civil society pressure. The most critical part of that movement must be organized in the United States. The United States solidarity movement must creatively organize actions and campaigns that capture the hearts and minds of the American people.

There are new and important examples towards this end. In California, member groups of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation successfully campaigned to place a referendum on the state-wide ballot in the next elections. It calls on that state to divest teachers' and state workers' retirement pension funds from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation.

Nationally, churches and civic groups are increasingly debating divestment from companies that do business with Israel, sell weapons to Israel or provide them bulldozers for the demolition of houses. In the past few weeks, international pressures have made it difficult for the United States Government to send previously promised Caterpillar tractors, long a target for boycott organizing since the killing of Rachel Corrie.

Frustration over United Nations and United States failures continues to compel organizing for more humanitarian efforts by United States citizens and others to break the cruel and inhumane blockade of the people of Gaza. The boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns all over the world are having a real impact on Israel. They say that this so called de-legitimization project is more dangerous to their security than the violence on the part of Palestinian resistance.

These are all important developments, but civil society alone win not end the occupation of Palestine. The United Nations must continue to challenge the unilateral role of the United States Government in the region. It must resist the attempts to circumvent international law. The United Nations various bodies and institutions remain critical to revealing the truth about the Israeli occupation and the plight of the Palestinian people, while creating a framework for the long-term resolution of the conflict.

The United Nations is where international public opinion can be registered and international law revived. The United Nations is the standard by which we judge the actions of our own Governments. The irony of this statement is not lost today in the wake of the recent WikiLeaks publications.

Our road map for reversing the damage of the Gaza blockade, removing the apartheid wall and ending the occupation as a whole must combine the moral authority of the United Nations with the collaboration of our own Governments and the grassroots reach of global civil society. Only through the harnessing of all of these forces — the United Nations, our Governments and civil society — can right overcome might in Israel and Palestine; can the rule of international law become the norm rather than the exception in the Middle East; can we put an end to the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region; can we realize the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions.

I thank the Committee for providing the opportunity for civil society voices to be raised in support of justice for the Palestinian people. Our cause is just. Our task is urgent.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Judith LeBlanc for her statement and, through her, all the civil society organizations throughout the world that are actively seeking a resolution to the question of Palestine for their efforts and their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

I now have the pleasure of announcing that the Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from a number of heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I would recall that the text of these messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights. I would, however, like to read aloud the list of representatives who sent them, in the order that we received them.

We have received messages from the following heads of State: Her Excellency the President of the Argentine Republic; His Excellency the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil; His Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Senegal; His Excellency the President of Turkey; His Excellency the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka; His Excellency the Interim President and President of the Transition of the Republic of Guinea; His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; His Excellency the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria; His Excellency the President of the Lao

People's Democratic Republic; His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; His Excellency the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; His Excellency the President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation; His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam; His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Tunisia; His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Morocco; His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain; His Majesty the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia; His Excellency the President of the Republic of Belarus; His Excellency the President of the Gabonese Republic; His Highness the Emir of the State of Qatar; and His Excellency the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

We have received messages from the following heads of Government: His Excellency the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China; His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Republic of India; His Excellency the Prime Minister of Malaysia; and His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

We have received messages from the following Ministers for Foreign Affairs: His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Botswana; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic; and His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

We have received messages from the following Governments: the Government of the Sultanate of Oman; the Government of the Republic of Guyana; and the Government of the Republic of Ghana.

We have received messages from the following intergovernmental organizations: the European Union; His Excellency the Secretary General of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference; and His Excellency the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We have received a message from the following specialized institution: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

We have received a message from the following civil society organization: Caritas-Jerusalem.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the heads of State and Government, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Governments and the organizations just listed for their persistent efforts undertaken in the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for their constant support for the activities with which the Committee has been tasked.

The statements that we have heard and the messages of solidarity we have received today once again demonstrate the unfailing support of the international community to the establishment of peace in the Middle East and to the effective exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and international law. I assure participants that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will spare no effort in seeking to reach these objectives.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): On behalf of Palestine, the Palestinian people and the leadership of Palestine, I would like to express our gratitude to all those who were with us today in expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people on this very important occasion, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. We also express our gratitude and appreciation to all the countries that sent messages on this occasion to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people — all the Presidents, heads of State, Kings, Emirs, Prime Ministers, ministers and all others. I would also like to express our appreciation for the strong presence of civil society with us and the statement made on behalf of civil society. We believe that the cause of Palestine is a very important one that is close to the hearts of all civil societies that support just causes.

In conclusion, I would also like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Ashtar Theater Group, which has been touring all corners of the globe and decided to conclude its trip by performing “The Gaza Monologues, a series of vignettes about the suffering of our people in Gaza. They will be with us in a few minutes. I would like to express, on behalf of Palestine and all participants here today, our appreciation to the Ashtar Theater Group from Ramallah. The members of the group, who come from more than 20 different countries, have come together to tell stories of the suffering of our people in Gaza.

Again, I thank the Committee very much for its strong message of solidarity. I am sure that, hopefully, next year or very soon, we will celebrate the independence of the State of Palestine and its full membership in the United Nations system.

The Chair (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ambassador Riyad Mansour for his important statement. I would once again like to reiterate the Committee’s determination to pursue its work until we achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

Before adjourning this special meeting, I would like to thank all those who have helped to organize this

meeting — in particular staff members from the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information and the Office of Central Support Services — and all those who worked for the success of this meeting.

Immediately following the conclusion of this meeting, here in this conference room, the Ramallah-based Ashtar Theater Group will give a performance entitled “The Gaza Monologues”. Poignant testimonies of the young people of Gaza will be performed by actors from all corners of the world who have come together for this occasion. As a token of our solidarity, I invite participants to remain in the room for the performance.

I would also like to invite participants to this evening’s opening of an exhibition presented by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, entitled “Summer Games in Gaza”, which will take place at 6 p.m. in the north-east gallery of the Public Lobby of the General Assembly building. The exhibition has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the Finnish Government, which we thank. It will be accompanied by a performance of the second part of “The Gaza Monologues”. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

The meeting rose at noon.