



# General Assembly

Official Records

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

**347<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Thursday, 29 November 2012, 10 a.m.  
New York

*Chair:* Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

### International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): We hold a special meeting today on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority; Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly; Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations; Mr. Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority; Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey; Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, President of the Security Council and Permanent Representative of India; 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 and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka; and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs.

I would also like to welcome the representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, as well as all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in today's special meeting. Our special thanks go to Mr. Roger Waters, singer-songwriter and founding member of Pink Floyd, who has kindly accepted

the Committee's invitation to participate in today's meeting to deliver a message on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

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

As we officially open this solemn meeting, the new tragedy that has struck Gaza and its surrounding areas is still fresh in our minds. On many occasions, we have drawn the attention of the Security Council to the dangerous situation in the territories. Yet, the international community has not been able to find the means for a new impetus to restore peace in time.

The Committee has strongly condemned the violent attacks launched by the Israeli army against Gaza, which has already endured so much suffering. The Committee has also denounced just as strongly the indiscriminate rocket fire originating from Gaza. Never has peace been more essential for all the peoples of the region; yet, never has it seemed so far out of reach.

We are meeting here once again to mark the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, commemorated on the anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations partition plan in 1947. The Day provides us with an opportunity to review the decades that have passed, during which almost everything has been tried, in vain, to establish a definitive peace. The promises to bring justice to all the peoples of the subregion, including the Palestinian people, have languished year after year, to the great distress of the 5 million refugees who still await, in exile, for a solution to their tragic fate.

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The year 1967 marked the beginning of the Israeli occupation, which will soon have lasted 50 years. During the 1990s, the Oslo Accords brought hope by laying the foundation for a transition that was to be completed by the year 2000. The Quartet road map, for its part, provided that the two-State solution would be in effect by 2005 at the latest. Nothing of significance came out of those deadlines in which the Palestinians had placed great hopes. Peace initiatives vanished into thin air one after another. In the meantime, settlements, which at the beginning numbered a few dozen settlers, have grown to more than half a million inhabitants, leaving less and less room for the future Palestinian State.

Palestinians feel cheated. They are tired of promises not kept, dulled by soothing speeches, weary of awaiting their hour. The Palestinians need their own State, here and now. Every year, they are asked to be patient because international diplomacy is on the verge of making the final advance that will change their lives. They do not want to wait any longer; they cannot wait any longer.

The public institutions that Palestinians have built with the help of the international community are disintegrating for lack of funding. The sealing off of territories and the withholding of tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority have had disastrous consequences for the functioning of those institutions. We would like to take this opportunity to urge donors to continue to provide assistance and to intensify it as a matter of urgency.

I would now like to turn to the topical question of the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a non-member observer State. Although some Member States could be sceptical about the wisdom of the change in strategy by the Palestinians concerning the modification of their status at the United Nations, no one can nevertheless dispute the legitimacy of their approach. The right of Palestinians to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty in their own State is undeniable. The General Assembly confirms that year after year by an overwhelming majority.

I would like to call on participants to consider the new request by the Palestinians while bearing in mind all that I have just recalled. The United Nations has permanent obligations regarding the question of Palestine; Member States do as well, some more than others for historical reasons. I would further urge

participants to show their solidarity by voting in favour of the four draft resolutions that I will submit to the General Assembly this afternoon under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine" (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20).

The Committee will continue to fulfil the mission entrusted to it by the General Assembly as long as the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are not being fully respected. We will remain mobilized in favour of a definitive settlement of the conflict based on a two-State solution that is just and lasting and allows Israel and Palestine to live side by side in peace and security.

I now have the honour of giving the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

**The Secretary-General:** Sixty-five years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), proposing the partition of the Mandate territory into two States. Sixty-five years later, that vision of a two-State solution remains tragically unfulfilled.

During my recent trip to the Middle East, following the dangerous escalation of violence in Gaza and Israel, I saw yet again the disastrous consequences of the absence of a permanent resolution of the conflict. Palestinians and Israelis spoke to me about the horror of living in fear of the next attack and of the next disruption to their normal lives. They voiced despair at what seem to be receding prospects for lives of dignity and calm.

The Middle East is changing rapidly and profoundly. It is more urgent than ever for the international community and the parties to intensify efforts towards peace. This date, 29 November, has great meaning for both sides. This year it takes on added significance, with the Palestinian decision to seek non-member observer State status through a vote in the General Assembly later today.

The outlines of an end to the conflict are clear. We know them well. They are laid out in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including that of land for peace, the road map and existing agreements between the parties. I would also like to stress the importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

What is needed now is political will and courage. Leaders must show a sense of historic responsibility and vision. Israelis and Palestinians must break out of a zero-sum mentality and embrace a peaceful path

forward. That is the best hope for both peoples. Young people in particular should be given a reason to look to the future with expectation, not with resignation at the certainty of a prolonged conflict.

Final-status issues can be resolved only through direct negotiations. Violence is not the way. It only breeds more hatred and bitterness. Much work lies ahead to create the conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations and to preserve the viability of the two-State solution.

It is crucial to sustain the ceasefire concluded on 21 November, which ended more than a week of devastating violence in Gaza and southern Israel. There must be no rocket fire from Gaza. I have condemned it repeatedly. There is no justification for indiscriminate attacks against civilian targets. Issues that have been pending since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), almost three years ago, must be deferred no longer: ending the closure, preventing the illicit trafficking of arms and achieving intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

Palestinian unity that supports a negotiated two-State solution is essential to achieve a just and lasting peace for the creation of a Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank. It is equally important to preserve and support the commendable achievements of the Palestinian Authority's State-building efforts.

Continued settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a violation of international law and the road map. Such activities must cease. Unilateral actions on the ground will not be accepted by the international community and will not be allowed to prejudice the outcome of the negotiations.

I share the deep and, indeed, global frustration that the two-State solution seems ever more distant. The cost of the continued stalemate rises with each passing day and with each missed opportunity.

That is the complex and wrenching backdrop, past and present, against which the Palestinians have decided to seek non-member observer State status in the General Assembly. It is a matter for States Members of the United Nations to decide. It is important for all concerned to approach the decision responsibly and constructively.

Efforts should be focused on preserving the commendable achievements of the Palestinian Authority on the ground and on relaunching meaningful

negotiations. That is the only way to resolve all permanent status issues.

Our priority remains to undertake the painstaking work of realizing the just and lasting peace for which generations of Palestinians and Israelis have longed — a peace that ends the occupation started in 1967 and ensures an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine living side by side with a secure State of Israel.

I call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to breathe new life into the peace process, which is now on life support. I urge the international community to help them to forge a credible political path that will realize the legitimate aspirations of both sides. I pledge to do everything in my power to support that goal.

On this International Day, I count on all involved to work together to translate solidarity into positive action for peace.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his important statement. Allow me to express the Committee's sincere appreciation for the Secretary-General's continued efforts to resolve the question of Palestine, as demonstrated by his recent visit to the region. That visit helped to de-escalate the violence in and around Gaza and to conclude a ceasefire.

I have slightly changed the order of speakers for this morning. The President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, was to speak immediately after me. Allow me to apologize to him. I now give him the floor.

**Mr. Jeremić**, President of the General Assembly: I accept your apology, Mr. President, on such an occasion.

It is a great privilege to participate in the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on this historic date. This is an emotional occasion for me personally, given my ancestors' legacy. They are no longer with us, but we are with them, and proudly so. It is truly an honour, President Abbas, to have you with us.

I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its dedicated work and for convening this meeting, as it has every year since 1978.

The quest to fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is the item that has remained on the agenda of the General Assembly longer than any

other. Nearly 70 years since the plenary's adoption of resolution 181 (II), in 1947, a two-State solution has still not come to pass. Millions of Palestinians continue to live in poverty in the myriad camps scattered throughout the Middle East. My deeply held view is that that is one of the world's most fundamental wrongs. It contradicts the central tenet of the Charter of the United Nations: to create a workable international system that not only helps to prevent conflicts but also asserts the pre-eminence of justice, pledging not only equal rights to all nations but ensuring their equal dignity as well.

At the start of my term in office, I called on Member States to work together so that this session of the General Assembly may go down in history as an Assembly of peace. On this occasion, when the United Nations solemnly observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I renew that call.

I know how deep the feelings of injustice may rightfully be, but focusing exclusively on such a sentiment will not close the book on an era of enmity in the Middle East. At this delicate moment, we must try to avoid bitter and self-perpetuating divisions and their accompanying calls for more and more vengeance.

The horrors of the past inevitably shape who we are but, unless we are ready to tame and eventually overcome them, the future is not likely to be any different. I am convinced that the courage to reach out across the divide can be found, so that the wounds can heal and the region can finally come to prosper in peace and security.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed a new wave of strife in Gaza. I praise the valiant efforts to help broker a truce by the His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Morsy, President of Egypt; His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General; The Honorable Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States; and others. However, the recent upsurge in violence reminds us of the urgency of the task that now must follow: to resume peaceful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement to the question of Palestinian statehood. The suffering in the Holy Land must come to an end.

I am grateful to the Committee for its continuing role in focusing the attention of the General Assembly and the rest of the United Nations system on the tragic plight of the Palestinian people. Its consistent promotion of their inalienable rights and its support for the Middle East peace process remain critical, as are its efforts to

mobilize international assistance to those who need it most. In a few hours' time, the General Assembly will consider a draft resolution to renew the mandates of the Committee and the respective Secretariat units. But it will also take up for the first time a draft resolution to accord to Palestine the status of a non-member observer State in the United Nations.

This is going to be a historic day. Whatever the result of the vote, it will be crucial for the Palestinians and Israelis to transform its effects into an opportunity — an opportunity to return to the negotiating table, actively supported by all who can help bring them closer together.

The goal must be to repair the breach, and to achieve at long last what was envisioned in 1947: a just and comprehensive settlement; a two-State solution.

I come to the end of my remarks by recalling the eloquence of a great classical poet, and his timeless entreaty to “bring to pass that the savage works of war may be stilled to rest throughout all seas and lands” so that one day soon, the State of Israel may live in security and that the State of Palestine may take its dignified and rightful place in the world family of nations.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): The Committee appreciates your eminent role, Sir, in conducting the work of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine. We truly appreciate your leadership in this particular area.

I now have the pleasure and honour to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India and President of the Security Council.

**Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri**, President of the Security Council: Let me begin by thanking the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me, in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November, to address this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Security Council remains committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. The Security Council also remains committed to seeking a comprehensive resolution to other Arab-Israeli issues and, in that regard, recalls its previous relevant



resolutions and notes the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Throughout the past year, developments in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, remained prominent on the Council's agenda. The Council has remained seized of those issues, has continued to receive monthly briefings on the situation from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator and from the Department of Political Affairs and has held regular open debates. The Security Council also discussed these issues at a high-level meeting held during the month of September on strengthening the relationship between the Security Council and the League of Arab States. In the context of recent hostilities affecting the Gaza Strip and Israel, the Security Council also held a private meeting on 14 November (see S/PV.6863).

The application by Palestine for membership of the United Nations was one of the main issues considered by the Security Council and its Standing Committee on Admission of New Members in the last quarter of the year 2011. The issue remains before the Council following adoption of the report by the Committee on Admission of New Members in November 2011 (S/2011/705). Early this year, the Security Council also discussed an invitation extended on behalf of President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership for the Security Council to undertake a visit to the region.

Over the course of the year, members of the Council expressed concern at, and many condemned, the steady expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, terming them as illegal under international law or illegitimate. The members also reiterated their view that such actions undermined peace efforts and the viability of the two-State solution, and stressed the need for respect of international obligations in that regard.

Despite several commendable bilateral and multilateral initiatives leading to some notable developments, the Council members regret to note that direct talks between the parties have not resumed. Council members have repeatedly stressed the importance of resuming Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and encouraged both sides to keep up direct contact so as to maintain positive momentum towards the resumption of dialogue and negotiations.

Council members continue to view the situation in Gaza with concern, and repeat their calls for the

full implementation of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), and, in that context, they stress the need for a sustained and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza, an end to the smuggling of weapons and rockets, and the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. Council members also continue to express concern at, and many have condemned, the firing of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. In a statement to the press on 21 November (SC/10829), the Council welcomed the ceasefire agreement reached in relation to the Gaza Strip in order to bring about a sustainable and durable cessation of hostilities affecting the Gaza Strip and Israel. The Council also expressed its continued support for the ongoing international efforts to consolidate the agreement. The members of the Security Council also deplored the loss of civilian lives resulting from the recent escalation.

Council members noted the results of the most recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, held on 23 September 2012. At that meeting, based on reports and recommendations from the parties, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Quartet Representative, donors reconfirmed their assessment that the institutions of the Palestinian Authority were above the threshold of a functioning State. Council members welcomed that positive appraisal and stressed the need for the continued strengthening of Palestinian institutions. Council members are also cognizant of the importance of continuing financial support to the Palestinian Authority, in view of its critical financial situation.

The past year continued to witness historic developments in the Middle East. The momentous changes across the region have emphasized even further the urgency of realizing a peace agreement that ends the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and resolves all claims. The Security Council has therefore called upon Palestinians and Israelis to seize the opportunity to reach a peaceful and final settlement.

The Security Council expresses the hope that — based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map and the agreements previously reached between the parties — urgent efforts will be made towards a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such a solution should end the occupation that began

in 1967 and result in the emergence of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours.

The Security Council has recognized the key role of the Quartet in the efforts to relaunch the Middle East peace process. As well, it has recognized the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative. Council members have expressed their full support for the continued efforts of the Quartet and its statements, including that of 23 September 2011 (SG/2178). The Council urges the parties to work constructively with the Quartet in that endeavour and stresses that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.

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 within mutually agreed and recognized borders. Council members have underscored that a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians and a final settlement of all core issues can only be achieved through direct negotiations. Council members have also reiterated their support for an agreed, just and fair solution to the refugee issue. The Security Council remains committed to upholding its duties and supporting a credible negotiations process between the parties, aimed at the early conclusion of a peace agreement.

Finally, the Security Council commends the laudable efforts of humanitarian organizations and agencies on the ground, particularly those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its staff. The Council encourages all members of the international community to support the Agency with much-needed financial contributions at this critical time. In view of the critical situation on the ground and the need for progress to be made in the political process, 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 and act to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter and those consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the matter.

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 and inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent and democratic State.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, President of the Security Council, for his important statement. Allow me, Sir, to express the Committee's sincere appreciation for the way in which he has steered the work of the Council in November, a month characterized by the grave crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The Committee sincerely appreciates the participation of His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, at this important meeting on this solemn occasion. His presence in New York will without a doubt mark the recent history of the United Nations. We eagerly await his statement to the General Assembly. We stand ready to support Palestine in the voting on a historic draft resolution (A/67/L.28). I assure him that the Committee will continue to work until the Palestinian people achieve their inalienable rights and until the question of Palestine is resolved in all its aspects.

I now have the honour to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Riad Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority.

**Mr. Malki** (Palestine): I have the honour to read out a statement from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“On behalf of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian leadership, it is my honour to address the international community on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As we gather again to commemorate this Day, we do so with pride. We are proud of the resilience of our people in spite of the many long decades of injustice, oppression and hardship, and proud of the strong support for the just cause of Palestine emanating from all corners of the globe. I reaffirm our deepest gratitude to all Member States, civil society and ordinary people from around the world who are standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people and whose unwavering support for the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people has been vital in maintaining our conviction that peace and justice are possible and will one day soon prevail.

“We are humbled by this historic support and we say, on this day, that their support is more vital than ever at this critical, decisive moment in time. We appeal to them to stand firm for peace, for the rule of law and for right over might. The time has come for Member States to uphold the principles and words they have committed themselves to over and over. It is high time to find the political will to act resolutely in line with the long-standing positions in support of the inalienable rights of our people, including to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and in support of a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the conflict, for which there is clearly no military solution.

“We recognize the noble efforts of the United Nations and by its major organs and specialized agencies, including in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, vis-à-vis the question of Palestine, consistent with the permanent responsibility of the United Nations until the question is justly resolved in all its aspects. We express appreciation for the goodwill efforts of His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and for the serious efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in support of the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people and a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“We are grateful for the strong resolutions adopted in the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other organs and bodies of the United Nations, which are firmly rooted in international law, including humanitarian and human rights law; which have safeguarded the rights of the Palestinian people over the decades; which address all facets of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including, inter alia, the core issues of the Palestine refugees, the right to self-determination, the status of Jerusalem, the illegal Israeli settlement campaign and the unjust blockade against our people in the Gaza Strip; and which repeatedly call for an end to Israel’s military occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, consistent with the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the principle of land for peace.

“On this, the sixty-fifth, anniversary of the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 181 (II), of 1947, which partitioned Mandate Palestine into two States, Israel and Palestine, we continue to look to the United Nations and appeal to the international community to uphold that covenant to our people to allow them to live in freedom and dignity in their homeland and to act in the interest of peace and security in our region. In that regard, we underscore the call in resolution 181 (II) for sympathetic consideration to be given to the application for membership in the United Nations by either State, and recall further that Israel’s admission to the United Nations, in 1949, was accompanied by two conditions, namely, Israel’s commitment to the partition resolution and the establishment of the Palestinian State. We also underscore resolution 194 (III), which, inter alia, calls for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and for just compensation.

“This year, which marks 45 years since the June 1967 war, in which Israel forcibly occupied the remaining territory of historical Palestine, that is, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, we reiterate that this unjust situation must end. We therefore reiterate our urgent calls on the international community to compel compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with its legal obligations, the relevant resolutions and its international commitments. Israel cannot continue to be permitted to act without consequence as if it is a State above the law. Serious collective action is required to send a clear message to Israel that it must abide by the law; that it is time for this prolonged, illegitimate occupation to come to an end; and that it is time for the realization of the two-State solution of an independent, sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, thereby ushering in an era of genuine peace and coexistence between our peoples and in our region.

“This is a matter of urgency because, in the midst of turbulent crises throughout the region, the critical situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is totally unsustainable and poses the risk of further destabilization, taking us farther away from our

shared goal of peace. In that regard, we condemn the recent Israeli aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip and call for protection for our people to ensure that those crimes are not repeated by the occupying Power. We reaffirm our appreciation to all those who contributed to bringing an end to the onslaught, especially Egypt.

“The Palestinian leadership continues to act with the utmost responsibility to serve its people and uphold its legal obligations and commitments. It has consistently acted with goodwill for the sake of peace, repeatedly reaffirming its adherence to the long-standing parameters of the peace process — embodied in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map — and its adherence to the two-State solution.

“For many years, we have expressed our readiness to reach a solution to the conflict with Israel that ensures relative justice and conforms with international resolutions and initiatives through the establishment of our Palestinian State on only 22 per cent of the territory of historical Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to reach a just and agreed-upon solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III). We reaffirm these commitments and that readiness once again today. Despite diminishing hopes and the decline of the situation on the ground due to Israeli violations, we remain committed to the two-State solution, and our hand remains extended in peace.

“That is why we have embarked upon the multilateral, peaceful, political initiative that will be considered by the General Assembly this afternoon, to accord non-member observer State status to Palestine in the United Nations. Our preference remains full membership in the United Nations, which is our legitimate, legal and historic right. We hope that the Security Council will one day soon positively recommend our application to the General Assembly. In the interim, we appeal to Member States for their principled support of the draft resolution (A/67/L.28) today in support of the Palestinian people, in recognition of their State and as an investment in peace. This is indeed a positive, constructive effort aimed at preserving the two-State solution.

“On this day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we affirm that we are a people clinging to our land, and we will remain on it. We have faith that every person in the world with a conscience and every State that respects the Charter of the United Nations will support and contribute to enabling our people to exercise their right to self-determination and to achieve independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.”

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of all those here today, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Riad Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, for having read out that message from President Abbas to the Committee on the occasion of the observance of International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić; the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; and the President of the Security Council; Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, have other engagements. We should let them attend to them, but first, on behalf of everyone here, I would like to thank them for having participated in this meeting that is so important for the life of the Palestinian people. I shall now suspend the meeting for five minutes.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.*

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Ambassador Palitha Kohona, Chair 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): I am honoured to speak today in my capacity as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at the General Assembly underscores the international community's commitment and responsibility to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Peace in the Middle East has eluded us for far too long, and it is a sad commentary on humankind that we have failed in that pressing task.



A few weeks ago, I presented the forty-fourth report of the Special Committee examining the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/67/424). The Committee was seriously disturbed by the situation in the occupied territories. At the time of our visit in July, in the light of the testimony received by the Committee, we were of the view that the situation on the ground, especially in Gaza, was unsustainable and that renewed violence was likely unless measures were taken immediately to ameliorate conditions. The events of the past few weeks would seem to support the conclusions of the Committee.

The continued demolition of homes and the resultant displacement of Palestinians, the blockade of Gaza and the consequent reliance on illegal smuggling simply to survive, led to one deeply troubling conclusion, namely, that those practices would amount to a strategy to either force the Palestinians off their land or to so severely marginalize them as to establish and maintain a system of permanent occupation.

The Committee was especially concerned about the condition of Palestinian children detained by Israel, who do not benefit from the basic legal, judicial or social safeguards to which they are entitled under international law. Between 500 and 700 Palestinian children are arrested every year. The Committee was particularly disturbed to learn that 12 per cent of those children were kept in solitary confinement.

The Committee called on Israel, consistent with its international law obligations, to adopt the recommendations, among others, relating to the arrest, detention and sentencing of Palestinian children, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers, and the blockade of Gaza. Similarly, the Committee called on Palestinian armed groups to comply with international humanitarian law and cease the indiscriminate firing of rockets and mortars into Israel.

While we welcome last week's suspension of hostilities, we are conscious of the continuing tense situation in Gaza. The international community must not lose sight of the overarching goal of two States living side by side in peace and security. Palestinians and Israelis could enjoy security and peace as neighbours through a political solution with human rights at its heart. We express our deep appreciation for those

countries, especially in the region, that have played a key role in arranging for the cessation of hostilities.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Kohona for his important statement. We are appreciative of his Committee's contributions to our meetings, as well as his country's participation as an observer in our Committee's activities.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Mr. Mohammad Khazaei, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, who will speak on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

**Mr. Khazaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am honoured to address today's meeting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Once again, we would like to show our solidarity with the Palestinian people and reflect on the tragedy of that people in the context of the illegal occupation of its territory by Israel. We reaffirm our determination to redouble efforts to peacefully, justly and comprehensively resolve the question of Palestine, including the adverse situation of its refugees, in accordance with the rules and principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Non-Aligned Movement has historically raised its voice in numerous international forums to support the Palestinian people in their just claim to a sovereign and independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. In that context, the Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, meeting at the Movement's sixteenth summit, held in Tehran in August, again reviewed the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated their grave concern regarding the suffering of the Palestinian people under the prolonged and brutal Israeli military occupation. Likewise, they rejected the ongoing deprivation of Palestinians' inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the return of the Palestinian refugees to their territories, as well as the full enjoyment of their right to a sovereign and independent State.

The Non-Aligned Movement appreciates the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as well as the efforts and initiative of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and its Chair, Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, aimed at the implementation of United Nations resolutions regarding

the question of Palestine. Unfortunately, despite the strenuous and much-appreciated efforts made by the United Nations to address the tragedy of the Palestinian people, whether through the assistance provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East or through the various recommendations and resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to reject those resolutions as if it were a State above the law.

It is regrettable that Israel has persisted with policies that are prejudicial to negotiations on the core issues, namely, the status of Jerusalem, settlement, refugees, security and water. That has, in turn, exacerbated conditions on the ground, undermined confidence, deepened mistrust and obstructed the resumption of the peace process. Israel has continued with its illegal campaign aimed at altering the demographic composition, legal status, character and geographic nature of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, so as to facilitate the de facto annexation of more Palestinian land. Israel has also continued to commit other violations, including the imposition of collective punishment, violations of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population, mass imprisonment of Palestinians and administrative detention, the routine demolition of homes and the resultant displacement of Palestinians, causing constant humiliation, hardship and instability.

The situation is most dire in the Gaza Strip, where approximately 1.7 million Palestinians remain imprisoned by the Israeli blockade imposed by land, air and sea. The latest Israeli military campaign against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which was carried out during the eight-day period from 14 to 21 November, reportedly resulted in the killing of more than 160 Palestinians, including women and children, and the wounding of approximately 1,200 other Palestinians. The Non-Aligned Movement strongly considers that military campaign to be a grave breach of international law, including international humanitarian law, in particular, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

While expressing alarm about the intensification of Israel's settlement activities, the Non-Aligned Movement stresses that the full cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is in compliance with international humanitarian law and is necessary for fostering an environment conducive to salvaging the two-State

solution based on the 1967 borders. The Non-Aligned Movement calls for urgent action and practical measures by the international community, in particular by the Security Council, to compel the occupying Power to completely cease its illegal and destructive settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, United Nations resolutions, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273) and its obligations under the road map in that regard.

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

In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement's Committee on Palestine has welcomed all efforts and initiatives aimed at achieving the two-State solution and realizing justice for the Palestinian people. It also stresses the importance of the developments to accord observer State status to Palestine, and expresses the hope that that multilateral, peaceful initiative — which is consistent with United Nations resolutions regarding the question of Palestine, including regarding the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the international consensus on the two-State solution — will positively contribute to salvaging the prospects for peace.

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

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I warmly thank Mr. Mohammad Khazaei, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who just made a statement on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We have all witnessed the ongoing support that the Movement has always provided to the Palestinian cause. We thank him for having reiterated that support.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the representative of Djibouti, who will deliver a message on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti and Chairman of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

**Ms. Hassan** (Djibouti): It is a great honour to deliver this statement on behalf of my Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, in his capacity as the current Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), at this special occasion observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“Today, once again, we are gathered here to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is yet another affirmation of the international community’s continued support to the Palestinian cause and solidarity with the Palestinian people. On behalf of the OIC, I am pleased to express our gratitude to the United Nations and all its organs. In particular, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo, for their relentless efforts and initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause.

“The OIC believes that the international community has a special responsibility to help the Palestinian people realize their national rights to self-determination, sovereignty and an independent State in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees in line with resolution 194 (III). In that regard, this afternoon, the international community will have a historic opportunity and responsibility to reaffirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people and support the just cause of the Palestinians for independence. The Palestinians have been negotiating intensely with Israel in good faith over the past two decades

to regain their territories and their inalienable rights and to live in peace and security. None of those legitimate goals, unfortunately, have thus far been achieved, and none appears to be within the grasp of the Palestinians in the short term, given Israel’s permanent strategy of shifting the goal posts.

“It is unfortunate that, on this very International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the prospects for peace and justice in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, are challenged by the occupying Power, Israel, through its discriminatory colonial policies and illegal practices. Israel is continuing to illegally build settlements in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. It is constructing the apartheid wall, restricting Palestinians’ access to places of worship, escalating acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, denying the free movement of people and goods and confiscating ever more Palestinian homes and land. Such daily violations of international law by Israel have become daily practices, which are systematically undermining the prospects for a two-State solution.

“The OIC expresses grave concern at the situation in occupied East Jerusalem, where the Israeli settlement campaign is most intense, and calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, excavations, including near Haram Al-Sharif, home demolitions, residency revocations and closure of Palestinian institutions in the city. The group condemns the terror, violence and provocations by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and property, including homes, agricultural lands and Muslim and Christian holy sites, and cautions that such actions are fuelling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization and must be brought to an immediate end by the occupying Power.

“Moreover, Israel’s escalating military aggression and the illegal blockade it imposes on the Gaza Strip are not only a form of collective punishment against the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Strip, but also a continuation of a war crime against humanity, which must stop. In the same vein, the OIC once again calls on the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibility and take the measures necessary for an immediate and permanent cessation of the Israeli aggression against the

Palestinian people. Ending the Palestinian people's suffering is long overdue, as is providing them with protection and the necessary means to facilitate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

"Palestine's accession to full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in 2011, was an international recognition of the Palestinians' rights. That achievement illustrates concrete and positive support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Similarly, the positive assessment of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund of the implementation of the Palestinian National Authority's 2009 plan for building the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a two-year period is yet another strong indication of Palestine's readiness for independent statehood.

"In conclusion, we believe that a permanent peace between Israel and Palestine is a *sine qua non* in order for both peoples to focus their energies and resources on developing their societies in peace, harmony and coexistence. The OIC expresses strong solidarity with the Palestinian people and once again urges all States Members of the United Nations to enable Palestine to become a non-member observer State by voting this afternoon in favour of the draft resolution on the status of Palestine in the United Nations (A/67/L.28). Granting Palestine improved diplomatic status, however symbolic it may be as a milestone in Palestinian ambitions for statehood, will bring Israelis and Palestinians a step closer to achieving a sustainable solution on the basis of two States living side by side in peace and security."

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I would ask you, Madam, to convey to Mr. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti and Chair of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, our appreciation for the support that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has always shown for the Palestinian cause.

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Tété António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, who will read a message on behalf of the African Union.

**Mr. António** (African Union): On behalf of the African Union Commission, allow me at the outset to salute the presence of the Palestinian delegation, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, and to express the Commission's deepest gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, for steering the work of this important Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the promotion of the just cause of the people of Palestine.

Today marks another day in the history of our collective commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Today, as usual, our statements will project a strong spirit of unity and solidarity with the Palestinian people, but the true test of our unity remains the scrupulous implementation of resolution 242 (1967) as the basis for achieving a just, viable and lasting solution. The date of 29 November is meaningful to the Palestinian people. On this day in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the territory known as Mandate Palestine into two States — one Jewish and one Arab.

The African Union believes that the road to a lasting solution is not an event but a process, and has spared no efforts to remain firm and consistent in its position taken at successive African Union summits. Accordingly, at its summit held in July last year, African leaders, among other aspects, reaffirmed their full support for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the principles of international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions to ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian State for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle, while further reaffirming support for the two-State solution as the only viable option for peaceful coexistence between the State of Palestine and Israel.

The African Union Assembly of Heads of State, in its decision EX.CL/Dec.652(XIX), also called upon States Members of the United Nations, especially the members of the Security Council, to support the Palestinian efforts to obtain full membership in the United Nations based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and urged all Member States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine as soon as possible.

(*spoke in French*)

The many decisions of the African Union summits clearly show that, from the former Organization of African Unity to today's African Union, Africa's



commitment to meeting the national inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, has been and remains a political position that arises out of a natural duty of solidarity and out of African peoples' faithfulness to their own history.

It is well known that the Middle East is the closest region of the world to Africa, that the members of the League of Arab States include nine members of the African Union, and that 26 members of the African Union are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation alongside Arab States. In that respect, the Palestinian issue is still inscribed on the agenda of our continental organization's summits, to which in the past we always invited the President of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and subsequently the President of the Palestinian Authority to attend. Similarly, resolutions supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people and urgent calls to the international community to become more engaged in the quest for a just and equitable solution have always been endorsed in the discussions of African Heads of State and Government.

We know that many other States and international organizations are also working in the same vein as the African Union and its member States. We also note that the genuine international consensus that has developed and been confirmed over the years regarding the central position of the Palestinian question in the Middle East conflict and regarding the demand for the creation of an independent Palestinian State has yet to bear fruit.

Significant, albeit continually frustrated efforts have been made by the international community since the start of the Israeli-Palestinian process in 1991. However, the outcome of those efforts remains very mixed, despite the Madrid terms of reference, which led to the Palestinian acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and to mutual recognition between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the State of Israel. Other steps that have also been taken have unfortunately proved to be imperfect achievements or incomplete stages, from the Oslo Accords to the Annapolis Joint Understanding of November 2007, which for the first time formalized the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by recourse to two separate States. In addition, the international community is regularly a powerless witness to events that contribute to perpetuating and escalating tensions.

We are perfectly aware of the complexity of the challenges to be overcome to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to create the conditions for a fair, equitable and lasting peace in the region. At the same time, the current situation is untenable and does not serve the interests of any party. Thus, a healthy jump-start by the international community is timely and needed to create momentum and eliminate the consequences of war in order to promote a decisive change that will firmly put the region on the path towards peace, encompassing all demands in all their dimensions.

*(spoke in English)*

This afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the status of Palestine in the United Nations. On this very specific issue, while lending their support, the African leaders in their declaration on Palestine, adopted at the July summit this year, underscored that membership of the United Nations is a right to be enjoyed by all sovereign States and that membership of the United Nations and in all its programmes and agencies is part of the peace process.

As we speak, human suffering, violence and mistrust, which have long dominated Palestinian-Israeli relations, continue to dominate them. Our overwhelming show of solidarity today must translate into tangible results on the ground, in the region and at the level of the United Nations.

The African Union remains committed to and resolute in its solidarity with the people of Palestine for the achievement of the two-State solution. The pivotal role of the Security Council, the General Assembly and this very Committee cannot be overemphasized.

**The Chair** *(spoke in French)*: I sincerely thank Ambassador Tête António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for having read out the very important message of the African Union. The African Union is renowned for the unwavering support that its members have always shown for the Palestinian cause. I would ask Ambassador António to convey to the President and the Chairperson of the Commission our thanks to the African Union and all its member States.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmed Fathalla, 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. Nabil Elaraby.

**Mr. Fathalla** (League of Arab States) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for giving me the floor to read out the following message of His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

“At the outset, in my capacity as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, it gives me pleasure to extend warm greetings to His Excellency the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its members and all participants. I should also like to express our deep appreciation for the Committee’s efforts in support of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“Some may ask why this occasion is marked on this particular day. The date of 29 November was chosen as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People because of its significance and implications for the Palestinian people. On that date in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), calling for the establishment of two States. However, the Palestinian State has yet to be established. The General Assembly chose this day in order that it may serve as an opportunity for the international community to focus on the fact that the Palestinian question has not yet been resolved owing to the lack of serious political will to implement a just and comprehensive solution. It also recalls that the Palestinian people have not yet realized their inalienable rights, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty and the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property, from which they have been displaced and expelled.

“All such rights are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. However, owing to their inability to realize those rights, the Palestinian people continue to suffer the consequences of a historic injustice amid precarious circumstances and dangerous developments owing to Israel’s stubborn refusal to achieve peace.

“Although there is international consensus on the two-State solution as the basis for a peaceful settlement, leading to the establishment of an independent, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, Israel continues to defy and to violate United Nations resolutions, international legitimacy and human rights instruments. Israel continues its settlement policy, which seeks to swallow up the land of Palestine, while its Government protects the settlers and covers up their actions, which are completely unjustifiable.

“Those actions include attacks against Palestinian civilians, the burning of copies of the Koran and the Bible and attacks against churches, mosques and clerics. In addition, more than 4,000 prisoners and detainees, including women and children, held in inhuman conditions in Israeli jails, some for more than 25 years. Such conduct demonstrates the racism of Israel and its settlers. It also creates new realities on the ground, undermining and jeopardizing the two-State solution and any real possibility of establishing a sovereign Palestinian State. Israel also persists in its unilateral and illegal actions to Judaize East Jerusalem and its surroundings, altering their demography, rewriting their history and obliterating their Islamic and Christian heritage. Such illegal actions, which Israel is committing with impunity, are in clear violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

“I should like to underscore the responsibility of the United Nations and all its relevant bodies and agencies to protect the Palestinian people and their property and to help them to fulfil their destiny. The Organization must also do its utmost to support the sacred and legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State.

“Israel continues to commit aggressions, including the recent attack on the Gaza Strip and its brutal blockade against the Palestinians in that territory. It continues to adopt dangerous racial practices and decisions that recall the apartheid policy of South Africa. Such actions have had an adverse impact on the lives of more than 1.5 million Palestinians and their descendants since 1948. They are also an attempt to impose and implement a policy of transfer and forced displacement and

to deny the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes.

“The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is occupied territory under international law and United Nations resolutions. Israel’s unilateral actions in the occupied Arab territories are therefore null and void and have no legal effect pursuant to Security Council resolution 252 (1968), of 21 May 1968. The resolution provides that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including the expropriation of land and properties thereon, that tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change the status of that city. The international community, particularly the Security Council, the Quartet and its influential members, in particular the United States, must shoulder their responsibilities and put an end to the Israeli Government’s strategy of evading and delaying any efforts to achieve peace and to start earnest negotiations to that end.

“We would like to reiterate the full support of the Arab States for the Palestinian position, as set out by President Mahmoud Abbas in his speech to the General Assembly on 23 September 2011 (see A/66/PV.19), as well as his speech of 27 September 2012 (see A/67/PV.12), in which he called for the establishment of the independent State of Palestine and expressed his commitment to pursuing negotiations to achieve a lasting resolution to the conflict, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. He also called for the immediate resumption of negotiations based on terms of reference that are in accordance with international legitimacy and for a complete halt to settlement activity. In view of Israel’s continued settlement-building policies, it is no longer appropriate or acceptable to continue conducting fruitless negotiations, direct or indirect, that waste time and effort and that do not achieve any progress on the ground. The Israeli Government bears full responsibility for the collapse of the negotiations and the grave consequences that may arise. That is all the more relevant given that it has been more than 10 years since the adoption of the Arab Peace Initiative at the Beirut Arab summit in 2002.

“Palestine’s decision to obtain non-member observer State status is part of efforts to achieve peace and of the international community’s responsibility to help achieve that peace. In recent

years, the role of the United Nations in finding a genuine and effective solution has been obscured. The Security Council and General Assembly must therefore promote international peace and security, which is the fundamental principle for which the Organization was founded, by taking positions and by adopting resolutions in support of the rights of peoples, in particular the Palestinian people. The General Assembly should adopt a resolution upgrading the status of Palestine to a permanent observer State until such time as the Security Council recommends its admission as a full Member of the United Nations, in accordance with international law. We urge it to do that as soon as possible.

“I also wish to reiterate that, in the twenty-first century, Israel cannot continue to control the destiny of the Palestinian people. It must heed the trend of history and ongoing developments in the Arab region. The future belongs to peoples, in particular the Palestinian people, who will not accept being dictated to. They have the resolute spirit and the strength of purpose to gain their legitimate rights, however long that may take, and to prevail over the challenges facing them. The best illustration of that changing reality is the fact that the Palestinian people withstood the recent Israeli aggression against Gaza. Dozens of elderly people, women and children perished. The Palestinian people suffered and made great sacrifices. Their infrastructure was destroyed, but their resistance to the brutal aggression was rewarded with a truce, brokered by Egypt on 21 November.

“On this important occasion, I would be remiss if I did not warn of the Middle East region’s precarious situation owing to the Israeli war machine’s brutal onslaught against civilians in the Gaza Strip, including children, women and the elderly. We must therefore focus on ending the occupation, which is the fundamental issue, and on lifting the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian people will then be able to live in peace and security in an independent State on their national territory of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“Similarly, I must also mention the fact that on 20 November, a League of Arab States delegation, comprising the Secretary-General of the League, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Arab States

and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, visited the besieged Gaza Strip. There it observed the extent of the material damage caused by Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of the Palestinian people. In that connection, I call on the international community to assume its responsibility towards the Palestinian people by providing all forms of assistance and by enabling them to live in peace and security, like other peoples of the world. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, must fulfil its duty to uphold international peace and security, which is being undermined by Israel's repeated acts of aggression."

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I sincerely thank Ambassador Ahmed Fathalla for the important message that he has just delivered. I would also ask him to be kind enough to convey to His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, our Committee's gratitude for the solidarity that the League has always shown for the Palestinian people and their noble cause.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Roger Waters, author, composer and singer and founding member of the band Pink Floyd, who will make a statement on behalf of civil society organizations that take an active interest in the question of Palestine.

**Mr. Waters** (Russell Tribunal on Palestine): I thank the members of the Committee very much for receiving me at this moment of solidarity and crisis. I am a musician, not a diplomat, and so I shall not waste this precious opportunity on niceties of protocol. However, I will say that you must all be suffering from listening fatigue, to a certain extent, so while I have also been sitting here listening, I have been editing my rather long speech down to a rather shorter speech, but I believe the full text will be available to anybody who cares to read it at the end of this meeting.

I appear before the Committee as a representative of the fourth Russell Tribunal on Palestine and, in that capacity, I represent global civil society. By way of preamble, I should say that my remarks here today are not personal or driven by prejudice or malice. I am looking only to shed some light on the predicament of a beleaguered people.

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine was created to shed such light and to seek accountability for the violations of international law and the lack of United Nations resolve that prevent the Palestinian people

from achieving their inalienable rights, especially the right of self-determination. One particular stimulus to our convening was the disturbing failure of the international community to implement and enforce the clear judgment of the International Court of Justice in 2004, contained in its advisory opinion on the Israeli wall, as requested by the United Nations.

We met here in New York City six weeks ago, on 6 and 7 October, having previously sent out invitations to all interested parties. After listening to exhaustive testimony from many expert witnesses and following careful deliberation, we arrived at the following judgements.

We found that the State of Israel is guilty of a number of international crimes. The first crime is apartheid. The United Nations International Covenant on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid defines that crime as inhuman acts by any Government that are committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them. That finding by the Tribunal was endorsed earlier in the year by the Human Rights Council Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Geneva after submissions by the Tribunal, made both orally and in writing.

The second crime is ethnic cleansing. In this case, that crime includes the systematic eviction of much of the native Palestinian population by force since 1947-1948.

The third crime is the collective punishment of a civilian population, explicitly prohibited by article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel has violated its obligation as an occupying Power throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Its most serious violations occurred recently in Gaza, with the blockade and virtual imprisonment of the entire population, the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians during the Israeli offensive operation Cast Lead in 2008 and 2009, and now the devastation wrought by the recent attack under the operation Pillar of Defence.

As I speak, I can hear the tut-tutting of governmental and media tongues, trotting out the well-worn mantra of the apologists. "But Hamas started it with their rocket attacks. Israel is only defending itself." Let us examine that argument. Did Hamas start "it"? When did "it" start?



How we understand history is shaped by when we start the clock. If we start the clock at a moment when rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel on a certain afternoon, that is one history. If we start the clock earlier that morning, when a Palestinian boy of 13 years of age was shot dead by Israeli soldiers as he played soccer on a Gaza field, history starts to look a little different. If we go back further, we see that since Operation Cast Lead, according to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, 271 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks and that, during the same period, not a single Israeli has been killed. A good case can be made that "it" started in 1967, with the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

The crisis in Gaza is a crisis rooted in occupation. Israel and its allies would contend that Gaza is no longer occupied. Really? The withdrawal of soldiers and settlers in 2005 changed the nature, not the existence, of occupation. Israel still controls Gaza's airspace, coastal waters, borders, land, economy and lives. Gaza is still occupied. The people of Gaza, the 1.6 million Palestinians — half of them children under the age of 16 — live in an open-air prison. That is the reality that underlies the current crisis. Until we understand that, and until representatives here today, their Governments and the General Assembly take responsibility to end that occupation, we cannot even hope that the current crisis is over.

In October, on the most recent occasion that jurors from the Russell Tribunal addressed this Committee, we were assured that our representations and reports would be presented on the floor of the General Assembly for general debate. If things go well today, we may hope to hold Committee members to that assurance.

I have been diverted briefly; let me return to the Israeli violations that the Russell Tribunal identified.

The fourth crime was in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition on settlements, specifically article 49. The settlements — all the settlements — are not simply an obstacle to peace, they are illegal.

The fifth crime was the use of illegal weapons. During Israel's Operation Cast Lead, four years ago, international human rights organizations documented Tel Aviv's use of white phosphorus in attacks on Gaza. Human Rights Watch found that

"Israel's repeated firing of white phosphorus shells over densely populated areas of Gaza during its recent military campaign was indiscriminate and is evidence of war crimes".

White phosphorus burns at up to 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit. Imagine what happens when it comes into contact with the skin of a child. Human Rights Watch called for Israel's senior commanders to be held accountable. However, thus far there has been no such accountability.

There are more violations, but members know that. United Nations resolutions trace the history of Israeli violations. Members regret, deplore and even condemn the violations, but when have their resolutions been implemented? It is not enough to deplore and condemn. What we need is for the United Nations — for representatives here, their Governments and the General Assembly in which they serve — to take seriously their responsibility to protect Palestinians living under occupation and facing the daily violation of their inalienable rights to self-determination and equality.

The will of "we the people of these United Nations" is that all our brothers and sisters should be free to live in self-determination, that the oppressed be released from their burden by being given recourse to the law, and that the oppressors be called to account by that same law.

In 1981, I wrote a song called "The Gunner's Dream". It appeared on the Pink Floyd album *The Final Cut*. The song purports to express the dying dream of a British Royal Air Forces gunner as he plunges to his death from a stricken aircraft towards the corner of some foreign field. He dreams of the future for which he is giving his life.

"A place to stay  
Enough to eat  
Somewhere old heroes shuffle safely down the street  
Where you can speak out loud about your doubts and fears  
And what's more  
No one ever disappears you never hear their standard issue  
Kicking in your door.  
You can relax on both sides of the tracks  
And maniacs don't blow holes in bandsmen by remote control

And everyone has recourse to the law  
And no one kills the children anymore.”

In 1982 and again in 1983, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 37/88 and 38/79, holding Israel accountable for its violations. Those resolutions called for a complete arms embargo on Israel. No such embargo has been imposed. Instead, it has fallen to global civil society to take the lead. Following a 2005 call from Palestinian civil society, social movements, activists and increasingly church bodies and even some local government authorities around the world have created the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions. It aims, as many members know, to bring non-violent economic pressure to bear on Israel to force an end to its violations, occupation and apartheid, denial of Palestinians’ right of return and Palestinian citizens of Israel being required to live as second-class citizens, discriminated against on racial grounds and subject to different laws than their Jewish compatriots. The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement is gaining ground, hand over fist.

Just last week, I was happy to write a letter of support to the student government of the University of California, Irvine, congratulating them on demanding that their University divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation. Also, last summer, I was in Pittsburgh to witness the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) vote on a resolution to divest from Motorola, Caterpillar and Hewlett-Packard. That would have been unthinkable 10 years ago. To quote the great Bob Dylan, “the times they are a’changing”.

Let me return to today. The members of the General Assembly are about to have the opportunity to vote on changing Palestine’s United Nations status to that of a non-member State. While not according full United Nations membership, it would provide United Nations recognition to Palestine as a State that would have the right to sign treaties, including, crucially, the Rome Treaty, so that Palestine could become a member of the International Criminal Court.

This is a momentous occasion, and the process leading up to it was started here 13 months ago. It is one of those rare instances where Member States can change the course and the face of history and at the same time reinforce one of the founding principles of the United Nations — the right to self-determination. The bid implicitly refers to the pre-1967 borders and includes the integrity of East Jerusalem, an autonomous

Gaza and the refugee diaspora. It is momentous because there are already over 132 Member States that have recognized Palestine as a State and more are appearing every day. Just this week, Hamas has lent its support.

I urge members to consider two points. First, I would call on them to resist pressure from any powerful Government to coerce them into defeating or delaying this issue. Sadly, there is a history of coercion in this hallowed place. No Government, however rich or powerful, should be allowed to use its financial or military muscle to set United Nations policy by bullying other States on this or any other issue.

Secondly, they should not take the statehood vote as the end of fulfilling their obligations. General Assembly responsibility goes far beyond United Nations technicalities. It must include real protection for Palestinians under occupation and real accountability for violations of the law. The General Assembly has powers it does not use. It does not have to defer to or wait for the Security Council.

In just a few months, we will commemorate the tenth anniversary of the killing of Rachel Corrie, the young peace activist killed by an Israeli soldier driving an armoured Caterpillar bulldozer as she tried to protect the house of a pharmacist and his family in Rafah, on Gaza’s border. International activists like Rachel Corrie, Tom Hurndall and James Miller took the risks they did, and they and their families paid the ultimate price, because the international community — Member States and the United Nations itself — had failed to protect the vulnerable Palestinian population living under that prolonged occupation.

We are proud, though tears burn our eyes, of the work of these young activists and deeply moved by their sacrifice. But we are angry, too, that our Governments and our international institutions, including the General Assembly, have failed to provide the protection that would make Rachel Corrie’s sacrifice unnecessary. Also, let us not forget the thousands of courageous and anonymous Palestinians and their equally courageous Israeli brothers and sisters in arms, a boycott from within, who protest peacefully on a weekly basis for the simple, basic right to an ordinary human life — the right to live in dignity and peace, to raise their families, to till the land, to build a just society, to travel abroad, to be free of occupation, to aspire to each and every human goal, just like the rest of us.

Speaking of the rest of us, I live here in New York City. We are a somewhat parochial group, we New Yorkers, to a large extent cut off by propaganda and privilege from the realities of the Palestinians' plight. Few of us understand that the Government of the United States of America, particularly through its power of veto in the Security Council, protects Israel from the condemnation of the global civil society that I have the honour to represent here today. Even as bombs rained down on 1.6 million people in Gaza, the President of the United States of America reasserted his position that Israel has the right to defend itself. We all know the reach and power of Israel's military capability and the deadly effects of its actions. So what did President Obama mean? Did he mean that Israel has the right to indefinitely occupy the whole of the region?

The Palestinians are an ancient, intelligent, cultured, hospitable and generous people. And of course, they have pride and will resist the occupation of their land and defend their women and children and their property to the best of their ability. Who would not? Would you? Would I? Would President Obama? One would hope so. It would be his duty.

More than a generation ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2625 (XXV), dealing with the principle of equal rights and self-determination. It recognized, in the preamble of the resolution, that when a people face "any forcible action" depriving them of those rights, they have the right to "actions against, and resistance to" such use of force. When the international community does not shoulder its responsibility to protect, Palestinians will shoulder that responsibility themselves.

This is not to suggest that I support the launching of missiles into Israel. I do not. The internationally recognized legal right of resistance means attacking any military target engaged in illegal occupation. But let us be clear, as we believe in the law as indispensable and even-handed. The launching of unguided rockets into Israel, where the most likely targets will be civilians, is not a legal form of resistance. It is wrong and it is to be condemned.

Many civil society activists, including many Palestinians and Israelis, are committed to non-violent resistance. The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, which has spread from Palestinian civil society to activists around the world, is part of that non-violent resistance and I support it wholeheartedly,

but let us be clear that the disparity of power, the reality of the occupation and the response of the occupied is the reality we face unless we find recourse in international law and hold all parties to it.

In the meantime, let me try to dial back the rhetoric a little and address the "Israel has a right to defend itself" claim from a legal and historical perspective. This will not take long.

*Ex injuria non oritur jus* — a legal right or entitlement cannot arise from injustice. If we truly oppose all violence, whether by the occupier or violent resistance by the occupied, we must aim to end the root causes of violence. In this conflict, that means ending Israel's occupation, colonization, ethnic cleansing and denial of the right to self-determination and other inalienable rights that the Palestinian people is entitled to, according to the Charter of the United Nations and other tenets of international law. So it should be in the future.

Hamas, having dropped its original demand for Israel to be dismantled in the run-up to the elections, was democratically elected in January 2006, in elections deemed free and fair by every international observer present, including former United States President Jimmy Carter. The leaders of Hamas have made their position clear over and over again. It is this: Hamas is open to permanent peace with Israel if there is total withdrawal to the 1967 borders, 22 per cent of historic Palestine, and the arrangement is supported by a referendum of all Palestinians living under occupation. I know everyone here knows this, but where I live they do not know this. They do not know that that is the position of Hamas, so I am telling them.

We are all here for the same reason. We are all committed to human rights, international law, the centrality of the United Nations and equality for all, including for Palestinians. We are all attending this meeting on 29 November that marks the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. But it seems to me, our commemoration of this day is not enough. So what else to do?

The battleground is here, at the Headquarters of the United Nations, and simultaneously in the middle of New York City, with access to the media. The battle is two-pronged. First, we must continue the work of informing the people of the United States of America about the reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and, most especially, about the role of their Government, the

host country of the United Nations, in using their tax dollars to fund and enable Israel's violations.

Secondly, and just as important, we must address, finally, serious reform of the United Nations. The United Nations needs to embrace a new democracy. The veto must be rethought or the United Nations might die. The use of the veto as a strategic political tool by one or other of the permanent members of the Security Council has become outmoded. The system is too open to abuse. The blanket protection afforded to Israel by the United States' use of the veto is but one example of such abuse. I urge the General Assembly to collectively work towards wresting the power back to the people in order to facilitate progress towards a more democratic body, better able to pursue the high aspirations of this great institution, to represent the will of the peoples of the great United Nations.

The General Assembly represents the largest and most democratic component of the United Nations. The United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom have no veto here. What is needed is political will. The Assembly can make decisions and take actions that the Security Council cannot or will not. The Charter of the United Nations begins with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations", not "We the Governments". I urge representatives — on behalf of the people of their countries, on behalf of the people of all countries, in fact on behalf of all the peoples, of this, our shared Earth — to act. They must seize this historic moment and support the vote today for Palestinian enhanced observer statehood status as a step towards full membership.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Roger Waters for his sincere and profound statement, which was so passionate and insightful. We thank him for having found the time to join us on this important occasion despite his busy schedule. We follow with interest his activism in support of the Palestinian people in his capacity as a member of the jury for the Russell Tribunal on Palestine. Moreover, our Committee had the opportunity to listen to a presentation by the jury members at the meeting in October. Mr. Waters also narrated a documentary produced by the United Nations, entitled *Walled Horizons*, in which he visits the wall in the occupied Palestinian territory and gives his impression as a musician and songwriter inspired by walls since the beginning of his notable career. The film helped to raise people's awareness of the reality on the ground and the difficult conditions that the Palestinian

people face daily. He also provides a wonderful example of what civil society can do to raise awareness and to promote solidarity with the Palestinian people.

I therefore take this opportunity to thank all civil society organizations that are involved in the question of Palestine for their support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people. In a few minutes we will watch the film and other documentaries once the meeting has concluded. I once again thank Mr. Waters.

I now have the honour of announcing that our Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government and from Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I would recall that the texts of the messages will be published in a special bulletin of the Division for Palestinian Rights but I would like to read out the list of officials and bodies that sent them in the order in which they were received.

We have received messages from the following Heads of State: His Excellency the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, His Excellency the President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, His Excellency the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, His Excellency the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, His Excellency the President of Burkina Faso, His Excellency the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia, His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency the President of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency the President of Pakistan, His Majesty the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ecuador, His Excellency the President of Cyprus, His Majesty the King of Morocco, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Belarus, and His Excellency the President of Afghanistan. We have also received a message from the transitional authorities of Mali.

We have also received messages from the following Heads of Government: His Excellency the Prime



Minister of India, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, and His Excellency the Prime Minister of Thailand.

The Committee has also received messages from the following Ministers for Foreign Affairs: His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, His Royal Majesty the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, and His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

We have also received messages from the following Governments: the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, the Government of the Republic of South Africa, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the Government of Tunisia.

From intergovernmental organizations, the Committee has received messages from His Excellency the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and from the European Union.

From civil society organizations, we have received messages from the International Progress Organization, based in Vienna, the NGO Working Group on Israel-Palestine, based in New York, the NGO Working Group on Peace, based in Geneva, and the Mennonite Central Committee, based in New York.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations that I have just mentioned and to all participants in today's meeting for their ongoing efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and for their steadfast support for the Committee's mandated tasks.

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

**Mr. Mansour** (Palestine): Allow me to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people and our leadership, including its large delegation, headed by President Abbas, to commemorate this year's International Day

of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in a very historic way.

We are very grateful for this tremendous event this morning and for the very powerful message of solidarity with the Palestinian people. We take that powerful message this morning as a significant signal of the remarkable and historic event that will take place this afternoon with regard to the Palestinian people, through their struggle and steadfastness and by resisting occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory. With the help of all Governments, civil society organizations and activists represented here and all those that support the just cause of the Palestinian people, with that collective effort and upholding international law, I believe that this afternoon we will prevail in recognizing the State of Palestine in the United Nations and in bestowing on us non-member observer State status.

At that historic event, we will legislate the two-State solution in a legal way through the recognition of the two States, thus allowing the negotiation between the two States to take place, while one occupies the land of the other, in violation of international law. With our collective effort, I am sure that we will succeed in putting an end to that occupation and in celebrating the independence of the State of Palestine. The historic event that will take place this afternoon will be remembered by us all — the Palestinian people in the occupied territory and in the diaspora — as part of addressing the injustice that has been inflicted upon us.

However, we know that that in itself is only the beginning of another stage. We promise that our brave people in the occupied territory, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, will be encouraged and that their resolve will be strengthened by the massive support for them here and the additional support of the international community this afternoon. They will continue their legitimate struggle to put an end to the occupation. Our people will not disappear. They will not vanish or leave our land. The only place in which they will stay is our homeland, Palestine. We are fully confident that we will succeed in ending the occupation and in celebrating the independence of our State.

I am sure that many participants will be with us this afternoon. It will be a very memorable and historic moment, in which we will open doors for the Palestinian people to be able to better defend themselves politically, diplomatically and legally, while we wage the struggle in every corner of the occupied territory — in the Gaza Strip, Bil'in, Ni'lin, Silwan, Jerusalem and Nabi

Saleh. That is in every part of the occupied Palestinian territory. Our people are brave and proud. Those here are supporters of such a people. I believe that we will be victorious, not only in what we will do this afternoon but also, ultimately, in ending the occupation and in celebrating the independence of our State.

This morning has been a wonderful celebration, for which we are grateful. This afternoon, there will be a glorious celebration. We thank members in advance and invite them to be with us. I want to thank my good friend, whom I have often called a twin brother, the Ambassador of Senegal and Chairman of this Committee, and all States members and observers of the Committee, for their wonderful action on behalf of the people of Palestine. When we succeed in accomplishing the objective of ending the occupation and celebrating our independence, we will put up statues to them.

**The Chair** (*spoke in French*): On such an occasion, we understand the emotion felt by our friend, Riyad Mansour. We would like to thank him for his important message. We deeply hope that, as he so rightly said this afternoon, with the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States, Palestine will take a further step in its quest for self-determination. Allow me to assure the Ambassador of the support of the Committee and of the overwhelming majority of members of the Assembly.

Immediately after the conclusion of this meeting, in this same room we will be showing some United Nations documentaries on the situation in the Gaza Strip and

the West Bank. We will also show the award-winning documentary entitled *This is My Land ... Hebron*. I invite everyone to stay and see the films as a small token of our solidarity. I also invite everyone to the opening this evening of an exhibit entitled "Palestine: Memories, Dreams, Perseverance". That will take place at 6 p.m. in the north-east gallery of the public lobby of the General Assembly Building. It will be followed by a reception. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

Before I adjourn the meeting, I would like to particularly thank Ambassador Pedro Núñez Mosquera, Vice-Chair of our Committee. He will soon end his term in New York and return to a new assignment in his beautiful capital, Havana. Ambassador Mosquera is one of the most charming people of the United Nations microcosm. We other members of the Committee greatly appreciate his sense of duty, kindness and hard work. On behalf of all my Bureau colleagues and all members of the Committee, I would like to sincerely thank him for his contribution to our work and for his unwavering interest in United Nations efforts to help settle this long-standing conflict. Ambassador Mosquera has worked hard. We wish him success in his future activities and in his personal and family life.

I would also like to thank all those without whom we would not have been here today, in particular, the staff of 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, as well as the interpreters and all those working behind the scenes.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*