Statement by Mahmoud Abbas Before the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at the 34th Session Held in Geneva

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Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Members of the Council,
UN Secretary-General, President of the UN General Assembly, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, President of the Human Rights Council Session, Representatives of Member States, International Organizations and Civil Society,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored today to attend this session of your distinguished and esteemed Council, recognizing the significant efforts that you are making in defending human rights and preserving the superiority of the principles for which this Council has been established. I am addressing you today to share with you the reality of human rights conditions in the occupied State of Palestine, which are tragic, as Israel, the occupying power, continues to violate the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and places itself above international law. Israel continues to flout the UN Charter and Fourth Geneva Convention.

Mr. President,

Seventy years have passed since the Israeli military forces dispossessed over half of the indigenous population of Palestine in 1948 from their homeland, and destroyed and obliterated the traces of more than four-hundred Palestinian villages and towns. Fifty years have passed since the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in 1967. In light of this tremendously serious situation which is constantly witnessing grave escalations in systematic and widespread human rights violation of the Palestinian people, there is a need now, more than ever, for the UN and its agency, and in particular the Security Council, to take on their full responsibilities.

Today we reiterate our demand for the establishment of an international protection system for the Palestinian people, which will put an end to Israeli violations of Palestinian basic rights, compel Israel to cease confiscation of Palestinian land, and stop seizure of underground water resources. The system of international protection must also call on Israel to cease the continued arrest of Palestinian civilians, home demolitions, and guarantee a peaceful and secure life for Palestinian children. In addition, a binding mechanism must be developed with a clear and definitive timeline, which includes Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territory, ending the belligerent military occupation, and eliminating the effects of the Annexation Wall and illegal settlements.  This will lead to an independent Palestinian State on the pre-June 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital. The State of Palestine will live in peace, security and stability side by side with Israel.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You all know that Israel continues its violations and illegal practices, besieges Palestinian cities and villages, holds thousands of Palestinian political prisoners in its prisons, and has recently announced the further construction of thousands of settlement units on our land and enacted a new law in the Knesset legalizing the theft of Palestinian land – a very dangerous precedent, which we, and the international community vehemently reject. The confiscation of Palestinian land by Israel will leave no room for our people to establish a state, and in fact establishes one state with two systems, known as Apartheid – the primary source of incitement and violence.   Consequently,  what is required is the prompt implementation of UN Resolution 2334.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Palestine today is a fact and with deep roots within the international community. In 2012 the international community recognized Palestine as an observer state in the UN, and since acceded to and joined international treaties and agencies. One-hundred-thirty-eight states have recognized the State of Palestine, the most recent being the Holy See, and a special ceremony was held at the UN Headquarters in New York to raise the Palestinian flag. Accordingly it is impractical for the sake of peace and justice to discuss temporary solutions or merge the question of Palestine within the framework of regional affairs as the current Israeli government has attempted to do.
In this respect we call on countries that have recognized Israel and believe in the two-state solution to defend and support this solution by recognizing the State of Palestine.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our hands are still outstretched for the achievement of a comprehensive and just peace and we are continually open to dialog and are ready to responsibly and positively deal with peace efforts and initiatives, the latest of which was the Paris International Peace Conference. We stand against all forms of terrorism in our regions and the whole world.

We also reiterate our readiness and willingness to cooperate with all countries, including the US Administration of President Trump, toward the achievement of peace on the basis of International law and international resolutions. Peace in the world can be secured by realization of the two-state solution, Palestine and Israel, living side by side on the pre-1967 borders in peace and security. The creation of the State of Palestine will undermine the driving force of terror and extremism, and we are a part of the international system combating terrorism.

Thus, we warn concerned parties not to take steps that contribute to strengthening the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine. This includes the support to the Israeli settlement enterprise, attacks against holy places, or moving embassies to Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is occupied territory and it is the capital of the State of Palestine. We do not recognize the annexation of Jerusalem and the holy city must be open to all followers of the three monotheistic religions.  On this point I want to stress our position and rejection to the use of religion to achieve political ends.

Bearing this in mind, we call on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to issue a list of companies that violate human rights.  We would also like to stress the importance of enhancing the human rights monitoring mechanisms of the Council through those means articulated under relevant agenda items regarding the conditions of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, specifically agenda item 7, a basic and permanent item on the Council’s agenda.  This procedure is in line with the historic responsibility of the UN toward finding a just and permanent solution for the Palestinian cause.

On the national level, we continue to build our national institutions on the bases of the rule of law. We are continually bolstering the Palestinian economy toward sustainable development across all sectors, while sparing no effort to provide assistance to our refugees in Syria and Lebanon for the sake of their survival and resilience in light of conflicts in their host countries.  In this respect we are grateful to UNRWA for its assistance to Palestinian refugees.

In addition, we are working toward the unification of our land and our people. We are bearing the responsibility of our people in the Gaza Strip and we working toward reconstructing what the Israeli occupying forces have destroyed, and taking necessary measures to lift the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. Further, we are preparing to hold general elections as soon as possible and we have a timeline for mid-May for municipal elections.

Our national institutions are working to anchor the rule of law by ensuring that our national legislation is in harmony with international law, and thereby fulfilling our commitments to international treaties and conventions.  I am proud to declare that Palestine has submitted its first report on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (known as CEDAW), highlighting the significant role of Palestinian women and their sacrifices and resilience in the state building process. The State of Palestine will fulfill all of its obligations and further submit human rights reports in the coming months.

Palestine has further submitted reports on environmental quality, anti-corruption, and cultural diversity pursuant to our international obligations, and in a manner that promotes and protects the rights and dignity of our people on the land of Palestine.

Once again I wish the Council success and the achievement of human rights across the world, and especially contribute to the restoration of human rights in occupied Palestinian. May the Council succeed to put an end to the ongoing violations of these rights, which will restore respect for human rights internationally.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Palestine will remain the greatest test for this Council, and its success in defending human rights in Palestine will determine the sustainability of human rights across the world. We must not fail this test.

I wish you all health and prosperity; and I wish the Council success in its current session.

Peace be with you.