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**Question of Palestine and Situation in the Middle East**

**71st Session 49th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly**

President of the General Assembly: The 49th plenary meeting of the General Assembly is called to order. Before we proceed to the items under our agenda, it’s my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the former President, the council of state, and minister of the republic of Cuba, his Excellency, Fidel Alejandro Castro Cruz, who passed away on Friday, 25th November, 2016. I’m deeply saddened by the passing of Fidel Castro and I wish to express my sincere condolences to his family, including his brother, President Raul Castro, as well as the government and people of Cuba. On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representatives of Cuba to convey these condolences. Fidel Castro was one of the iconic leaders of the 20th century, with a great love for his homeland and the Cuban people he dedicated his life to their welfare and development. A tireless advocate for equity in the international arena, he was an inspirational figure for developing countries in particular. His dedication to their advancements, especially in the fields of education and health, will long be remembered. And I invite you to join me in observing a one minute of silence in honor of his Excellency, Fidel Alejandro Castro Cruz .

Thank you. The General Assembly will now consider agenda item 35, entitled Question of Palestine. Under this item, the Assembly has before it a report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which is circulated in document A/71/35, the report of the Secretary-General, circulated in document A/71/359, and a note by the Secretary-General circulated in document A/71/174. In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it four draft resolutions, issued as documents A/71/L.18, entitled Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, A/71/L.19, entitled Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, A/71/L.20, entitled Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat and A/71/L.21, entitled Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine.

If you'll allow me to a statement. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I address my remarks today on the Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. Today's meeting takes place at the time when the Middle East region is being rocked by instability. Brutal conflicts in Syria and Yemen, a refugee crisis that is flooding neighboring countries, the virulent spread of extremism and terrorism, and the ongoing construction of settlements on Palestinian territory are combining to create a highly combustible situation across the region. For many, the prospects of peace and security feel desperately out of reach.

We are all gravely concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations in many parts of the Middle East. I call on all parties to make genuine efforts to find peaceful solutions and to cooperate very closely with the UN and humanitarian agencies to enable them to deliver urgently needed humanitarian food and medical assistance.

The occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 continues to violate key United Nations principles, including those relating to territorial integrity, the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war, equal rights, and self-determination of peoples. It is a situation that has a reverberations around the region. As this Assembly has said, achieving a just, lasting, and comprehensive settlement, the Question of Palestine is imperative for the attainment of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

The ongoing role of the United Nations in the peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine is clear with the General Assembly repeatedly affirming that the UN has permanent responsibility with regard to the Question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all aspects and in accordance with international law. To this end, I call for all involved to urgently take concrete steps to bring an end the violence, to comply strictly with international law, to restore political trust, and to build a climate for peace and resume meaningful negotiations.

This includes by all leaders refraining from provocative actions, incitement, and inflammatory rhetoric which is incompatible with advancing a negotiated two-state solution and only serves to perpetuate the cycles of violence and conflict. It includes by freezing the building of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, which the General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed to be illegal and to have a detrimental impact on efforts to resume and advance the peace process. It includes by respecting the historic status quo at holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif in both words and practice. And it includes all parties taking confidence-building measures aimed at improving the situation on the ground, promoting stability, building trust, and fostering the peace process.

To this end, I'd like to acknowledge the work being undertaken by a civil society to promote a peaceful settlement to the Question of Palestine. Despite the setbacks over the years, I remain hopeful that renewed international efforts can help to pave the way to realizing the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, security, and prosperity within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 lines.

Excellencies, I like to take the opportunity of today's debate to acknowledge the vital work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. For over 65 years, UNRWA has played a critical role in supporting the welfare and development of some 5 million Palestinian refugees. This includes their education, health, relief, and social services, support for camp infrastructure, provision of micro finance, and emergency assistance in efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. The generational impacts of UNRWA's work to support Palestinian refugees cannot be overstated and I sincerely thank UNRWA's donors and hosts for their support. This support including the responses to UNRWA's emergency appeals have helped to provide education and opportunity for Palestinian youth and to counter potential radicalization that has affected so many of the populations with high levels of youth unemployment.

UNRWA's mandate originates from the General Assembly and it is, therefore, to you then return to express my deep concern at the serious funding gap that has emerged and which is threatening UNRWA's ability to continue its work in providing relief to the Palestinian refugees. I urge all Member States to respond generously and expeditiously to UNRWA's efforts to fill its $74 million funding gap and to ensure that it has sufficient funds to be able to carry out its activities in an effective and predictable manner.

Excellencies, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be long-standing and the situation in the Middle East may be complex but we, the international community, must never let this discourage us or undermine our commitment to finding a just, lasting, and sustainable peace. As long as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, it poses a threat to international peace and security. And so as long it continues, the lives of millions of Palestinian people, refugees, and others across the region will be negatively impacted by unrest and instability. I, therefore, urge all parties and stakeholders to be courageous and committed to their efforts to finding a lasting, peaceful political solution to bring this conflict to an end.

And I thank you.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal in Senegal's capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People who will introduce draft resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20, and A/71/L.21.

Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, allow me at the outset to thank all those delegations and you personally, Mr. President, for having taken such an active part in the meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The messages and the statements of support that we heard this morning, which came from leaders from around the world show that there is a single voice on the part of the international community to ensure the enjoyment of the rights of Palestinians and the urgent need to reach a fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian Question, that is two states living side by side in peace and security as has been the demand for decades of UN resolutions on this issue. I would also like to stress the fact that the Committee received messages of solidarity from the Presidents of Algeria and Sierra Leone.

Ladies and gentlemen, so today we are here to debate the Question of Palestine at the 69th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 181 of the General Assembly on the separation of the historic Palestine into the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. However, the second country, the State of Palestine, has been refused its independence until today. Next year will not only mark seven decades of broken promises by the United Nations to the Palestinian people, it will also be the 50th anniversary of the occupation by Israel of Palestinian lands and of their inhabitants. So that's 50 years of occupation, of settlements and colonization, 50 years of clear annexation of East Jerusalem, and 50 years of oppression and collective punishment for Palestinians, their lives, their hopes, and their future. So it's 50 years of denial of the basic human rights and this is what we call a refusal to assure liberty.

So we are really at the heart of the issue of Palestine. That is refusing the freedom of Palestinian people. We recognize all of us that liberty is a fundamental freedom and without it other rights are eroded or at least made meaningless. An occupying power is not only required to ensure the social and economic well-being of occupied people, it should also be considered a temporary state of affairs and not represented an unlimited or permanent regime, and it should not deprive people of their freedom and their right to self-determination. Furthermore, those who occupy or the colonizers have always failed in their attempts to use the carrot and the stick to lead people to be dominated and to submit themselves to force.

People should not be obliged to accept imprisonment, however golden the cage may be. Liberty is not a reward given out. It is a fundamental right, it's the inalienable right of all peoples. It's part of our charter. It's the right of all nations and it's not subordinate to the desire of a third-party and it's not based on a certificate of good conduct given by the occupier. Our committee will continue to defend the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, to begin with their right to self-determination. We are pleased to note that the Member States including France, Russia, and Egypt as well as the Quartet are also striving to find means to make progress towards settling the Palestinian issue in all its regards in a fair and peaceful matter.

We, therefore, demand that all efforts continue to put an end to almost a half a century of occupation and put an end in the name of justice, an end to the long tragedy being lived by Palestinian refugees by making a Palestinian state that is really free and sovereign living alongside Israel and all its neighbors in line with international laws, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Principles of Madrid, and the Arab Peace Initiative, which for a long time have been the parameters for a fair and lasting solution.

We know and we understand the international community is encountering many crises and it could be thought that in amongst all these crises the Question of Palestine has at least been contained. This is a tough reality for those Palestinians who find that they must give up any hope to a solution in the near future unless they are spread out throughout that region and further afield to Europe, Asia, and Africa. But nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's consider for a moment the desperate situation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, or refugees in Syria in this period of serious conflict or in Lebanon or elsewhere in the region. The absence of any hope or political horizon which would allow solutions to this dreadful situation and to ensure the enjoyment of rights which have been denied so long has a profound impact and is destabilizing. And this status quo is clearly untenable. Furthermore, when we look at violent extremist groups threaten our planet by throughout the world undertaking attacks which cause flows of refugees to our borders and poison the heart and the spirit of our young people, we can only imagine that the main tool that is used by these groups is this open wound and the serious injustice that is the issue of Palestine.

And it's important to note that the international community represented by the United Nations continues to be clearly incapable of resolving the situation. Despite all the words and commitments that were made over the years, every day that goes by this climate of injustice and each picture of colonization of Palestinian lands and every video showing an Israeli hit a child or humiliate a Palestinian man or woman, all these stories only fuel the narrative of extremist groups such as ISIL, Al-Qaeda, and it also helps the recruitment of marginalized young people. The conflict around the Palestinian issue is not the issue of just some few people. It's not just a regional problem. It's in fact a global problem. And we are all feeling the impact of it wherever we may live.

But beyond the pragmatic questions, allow me to reassert in this body, which at the global level is responsible for ensuring that human rights are respected, allow me to remind you that no individual is free unless all individuals are free. The life of Palestinians has no price.

To use a slogan now being used, Palestinian Lives Matter.

So as we commemorate the adoption of the Resolution 181 and the date that will mark the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation and the 70th since the partition of Palestine, we should ensure that we implement the provisions that were adopted over the decades in this General Assembly and the Security Council to promote the enjoyment of the Palestinian people’s rights and a lasting, global, peaceful, and first solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Ladies and gentlemen, Your Excellencies, the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will continue to do everything it can to defend those rights and move towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and we will do this in cooperation with our partners, member states, international organizations, and civil society.

We reassert that our door is open and that we are pleased to hear all points of view. It’s through communication, not through confrontation, that we will resolve the Palestinian question. We will also continue to invite to our meetings and events all Member States, including Israel, and civil society organizations from both sides, whether they be Palestinian or Israeli. And the Committee is proud of allowing these players to meet, to debate, and to exchange ideas in a safe framework and this has been promoting peace and justice.

By not taking part in our debate, some members of this organization only ensure that their views will never be taken into account. We therefore call upon all delegations to support the activities undertaken by this committee diplomatically, legally, and politically as it undertakes its mandate rather than spreading unfounded lies.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to submit to the General Assembly the four resolutions that were approved by the committee under this agenda item, and they are Draft Resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20, and A/71/L.21. The approval of the Committee followed consultations with the regional groups. The first three draft resolutions concern the work of the committee for the inalienable – on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division of Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, and the General Assembly reasserts its importance it gives to these mandates, and as in the past, the committee seeks to ensure that all resources are given in an effective way.

Allow me to outline these draft resolutions. As you can see in the draft resolution dealing with the renewal of the mandate of the Committee, under reference A/71/L.18, the Assembly takes note that the Committee, as the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation approaches, to do everything in 2017 to put an end to the occupation and contribute to a fair peace.

And the second draft resolution, reference A/71/L.19, the General Assembly renews the mandate of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. It calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure that the division has all the necessary resources to undertake the activities outlined.

And the draft resolution on the Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, A/71/L.20, it renews the mandate of the department and calls upon it to continue those initiatives which produce a favorable climate for making progress towards peace.

In the fourth draft resolution, which is entitled Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine, with the reference A/71/L.21, the General Assembly reasserts its position with regard to the essential elements of such a settlement. It also refers to the new facts that have taken place over the last 12 months, and it highlights the fact that it’s urgent to put an end to the dangerous development of events on the ground and reestablish a political horizon that allows progress to be made and constructive negotiations aimed at reaching a peace agreement, which will put a total end to the Israeli occupation which began in 1967 and settle, without any exception, all issues relative to the final status ensuring a peaceful, fair, lasting, and global statement of the Palestinian question. It calls upon the international community to step up the coordinated efforts to establish a political horizon.

It also welcomes, in this regard, the initiative taken by France and the steps taken by the Quartet and the initiatives taken by Egypt and Russia. Furthermore, it calls for measures to be taken to ensure accountability in line with international law if Israel, the occupying power, continues not to take account of the appeals for a full end to the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This is a prerequisite for preserving the possibilities of achieving the two-state solution within the frontiers before – prior to 1967, and finally, to put an end to the Israeli occupation and ensure the enjoyment of the rights of the Palestinian people. We hope that the General Assembly will show a strong support to these four draft resolutions.

Thank you very much.

President of the General Assembly: And I thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. And I will – now I’m going to give the floor to His Excellency, Carmelo Inguanez of Malta, the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee’s report.

Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor for me in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to present to the General Assembly the Annual Report of the Committee contained in document A/71/35. The report covers developments related to the Question of Palestine as well as details the work of the Committee between 7 October 2015 and 3 October 2016. Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

Following the introduction, chapter 2 of the report provides a review of the situation relating to the Question of Palestine, as mentioned by the Committee, to draw the attention of the international community to issues requiring urgent attention such as the impasse in the peace process, the dire living conditions, and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, extrajudicial killings, and excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying forces, heightened provocations and tensions at the al-Aqsa Mosque and other religious sites, ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities, and increasing house demolitions in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem.

Under chapters 3 and 4, the report outlines the mandate entrusted to the Committee of the General Assembly by the General Assembly and contains information on the organization of the Committee’s work during the year.

Chapter 5 contains the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman’s participation in the Security Council debates and the continued dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations with the objective of mobilizing wide support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and urging action.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the special information program on the Question of Palestine carried out by the Department of Public Information in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 70/14 of 24 November 2015, as well as of activities reported by the United Nations relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East and the United Nations development program.

The last chapter of the Report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the committee to the General Assembly. In view of the stalled negotiations, the Committee would welcome the revitalization of the peace negotiations and supports efforts from any country able to advance the peace process conceivably with support from a reinvigorated Quartet in view of a comprehensive regional solution. The Committee also would urge the Security Council and the General Assembly to give positive consideration to proposals that endeavor to present a way out of the current impasse.

Allow me to recall additional key recommendations. In relation to Gaza, the committee would reiterate its goals to the international community to demand the lifting of the blockade. It also would call upon international donors to fulfill, without delay, all pledges in order to expedite the reconstruction efforts and to secure funding for long-term humanitarian assistance including for UNRWA.

In connection with Israel’s continued policy of illegal occupation and settlement building in occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Committee would welcome further measures by the Human Rights Council to expedite implementation of its resolution calling for the creation of a database of all actors conducting business in areas under Israeli military occupation. This is in accordance with the stance taken by the European Union on the importation of products from illegal Israeli settlements. The committee would encourage other organizations and states to adopt and implement such policies that guarantee the adherence to international conventions in regard of illegal settlements in occupied areas, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. It would welcome further steps by governments and private businesses to dissociate themselves from policies which directly or indirectly support settlements.

The Committee would continue to encourage civil society partners to work with their national governments, parliamentarians, and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the Committee and the United Nations as a whole. To ensure that governments actively support the realization of a peaceful and just settlement of the Question of Palestine, the Committee would reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations. Recognizing the growing importance of cooperation with developing countries and regional and sub-regional organizations in sharing experiences and implementing applicable solutions, it will make a special effort to step up engagement with such countries and organizations in the context of the South South and triangular cooperation framework.

The Committee would suggest that its program of international meetings and conferences in 2017 be focused on amplifying international support for the fulfillment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and bringing to a complete end of the Israeli occupation. The Committee would strongly recommend that the annual capacity building program for staff of the Palestinian government, managed by the Division for Palestinian Rights, be continued, and, where possible, further expand it in context of the commitment of the State of Palestine to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee would also request the division to continue its substantive and Secretariat support in the program of research, monitoring, and publications and other informational activities in support of the Committee’s communication strategy.

Finally, in view of the tragic approach of the 50th year of the Israeli occupation and the 70th year since the petition and to underscore the absolute urgency of achieving a just and lasting solution of the Question of Palestine, the Committee calls upon the entire membership of the General Assembly to join it in this endeavor.

In closing, I would like to express the hope that the report that I have just presented will be of assistance to this General Assembly in its deliberations on the Question of Palestine.

I thank you, Mr. President.

President of the General Assembly: And I thank the Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. And I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Palestinian representative: Mr. President, I thank you for your principled statement and the over – and the convening of this important General Assembly debate which coincides with the 39th annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this solemn day, as we reflect on the painful grave injustice that continues to be borne by the Palestinian people, the messages of support for the just cause of Palestine, and the moving expressions of solidarity, are not only a source of comfort, but also help to shore up our resilience in times of diminished hope.

As we approach the date making 50 years since the onset of Israel’s occupation in June 1967 as well as the 70th year of the Assembly’s partition of Mandate Palestine and the Nakba that followed, and is still – and still suffered by our people to this day, we are compelled to convey our hope that this time next year, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People may be observed with the commemoration of the achievement of a just, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Question of Palestine – a celebration of the independence of the State of Palestine and realization of Palestinian freedom and rights, and genuine Palestinian-Israeli peace.

Mr. President, this may sound like wishful thinking considering the harsh realities that overwhelm us and the fatigue felt by the international community after so many years of conflict, setbacks, and tragedy; yet this remains our primary overreaching objective guiding all that we do here at the United Nations based firmly on the Charter, the rules and principles of international law, and the relevant resolutions across the decades.

Our conviction in the law, our commitment to peace and coexistence, and the international community’s long-standing support nourish this hope and help us to endure despite immense odds and hardship. The Palestinian people remain steadfast as shall we in giving voice to their plight and in calling and striving every day for their rights and justice. We are thus deeply grateful for your solidarity on a day like this day.

Mr. President, today we pay tribute to the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has for over 40 years exerted efforts in support of the inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in freedom, peace, and security in their homeland. These efforts fully conform with the Committee’s General Assembly mandate, relevant resolutions, international law, and the UN’s permanent responsibility towards the Question of Palestine until justly resolved in all aspects.

Based on this responsibility, we again appeal to Member States to support the Committee to advance its noble objectives, bearing in mind the anniversaries we shall mark in 2017 and the current crossroads. We urge partnership with the Committee to enhance the collective efforts to end the Israeli occupation and make peace.

We thank Ambassador Fodé Seck, Chair of the Committee, for his leadership, a role graciously undertaken by Senegal over the years, and thank him for his statement and introduction of the resolutions under this item. We also thank the Rapporteur, Ambassador Carmelo of Malta, for presenting the Annual Report and thank the other Bureau members – Afghanistan, Cuba, Indonesia, Namibia, and Nicaragua, and all of the Committee’s members and observers for their principled support. We also renew appreciation to the Division for Palestinian Rights and DPI Special Information Program on Palestine for their efforts and support to the Committee.

We reiterate our thanks also to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report on the peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine and recognize his contribution over the past 10 years of his tenure to promote peace and to lead UN system efforts on the Question of Palestine. In this regard, we express appreciation for the support of Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, and Special Representative and Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, and their teams. We are also grateful for the tireless efforts of UN agencies assisting the Palestinian people, including UNRWA, with general support from states, organizations, and partners from around the world. Such support has helped sustain our people including 5.5 million Palestinian refugees through decades of conflict and crisis, and remains vital until a just, durable solution is achieved.

Mr. President, while grateful for this support, we cannot conceal our deep disappointment and frustration at the absence of serious efforts to uphold political and legal responsibilities towards the Question of Palestine – the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As the situation further deteriorates and peace remains far from our grasp, we lament in specific the Security Council’s failure to uphold its charter duties and implement its resolutions. Generations after generation of Palestinians is deprived of rights and a life of freedom, stability, prosperity, and dignity. Despair and hopelessness of our youth in particular at this moment, whether in occupied Palestine or throughout the Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, is a source of vast pain and worry.

As this injustice persists, constituting a bleeding wound in the Middle East, destabilizing the region, and undermining peace and stability far beyond, and weakening international law and the international system itself, we must ask, when will the Security Council finally respond to the global appeals to act? How can the international community continue justifying inaction and lack of accountability as we approach the half-century mark of Israel’s military occupation, and as the international promise to the Palestinian people remains broken and they continue to be denied self-determination – the most fundamental human right.

Mr. President, what is lacking has not been support or solidarity for Palestine, but rather political courage and will to respect and ensure respect of the law in the face of Israel’s intransigence and disrespect. Resolution after resolution is being violated as Israel – the same Israel created by General Assembly Resolution 181 – blatantly disregards the General Assembly and Security Council, tramples international law, disrespects the ICJ advisory opinion. Dismissing the calls to comply with the law, the Israeli government instead commits violations and crimes as if it were exempt from the law and as if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the exception to every norm and rule intended to safeguard human rights and peace and security. And yet, the international community fails to act.

For those taking comfort and complacency in the status quo, including the historic status quo regarding the holy site in occupied East Jerusalem, including Al-Haram Sharif, the reality is that the status quo is being severely undermined and altered every single day by the occupying power. This is further inflaming tensions, destabilizing the situation, destroying the viability of the two-state solution, and obstructing peace with far-reaching consequences. So again we ask, what is the threshold for action?

Mr. President, reflecting on the past year alone begs this question even more insistently. As international paralysis has continued, Israel, of course, has persisted with its systematic gross violations of international law in occupied Palestine with full impunity, destroying the prospects for peace. Report after report before this Assembly including inter alia by the Secretary-General, convey a shocking reality of a vast regime of violations by the occupying power, intensifying distress among the Palestinian population and need for their protection.

As reflected in recent reports, including the July 2016 Quartet report, the past year witnessed nonstop Israeli colonization activities deliberately aimed at altering the demography, character, and status of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This included the expansion and construction of settlements and the wall, unprecedented rates of home demolitions and destruction of civilian infrastructure and humanitarian assistance, confiscation of land, forced displacement and transfer of Palestinians, especially vulnerable Bedouin communities, imposition of hundreds of checkpoints impairing freedom of movement and socioeconomic life, including access to lands and livelihoods, exploitation of natural resources and obstructing access to water and agricultural lands, and blatant annexation threats by Israeli officials.

The year also witnessed daily Israeli military raids causing death and injury to Palestinian children, women, and men, routinely assaulted and traumatized by occupying forces and by extremist settler terror and violence. Massive forms of collective punishment, constant intimidation and humiliation, racist discriminatory policies, and blatant dehumanization of the Palestinian people and constant attempts to negate their identity, history, and heritage, provocations and incitement against holy sites, particularly in Al-Quds and Al-Khalil, especially at Al-Haram Sharif and the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and at Al-Haramal Al-Ibrahimi, and aggravation of religious sensitivities and daily arrest and detention of civilians – foremost young men – with more than 7,000 Palestinians now imprisoned or detained in Israeli jails.

It has also included continuation of Israel’s aggression, threats, and illegal, inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip where 2 million Palestinians are being mercilessly besieged and collectively punished, enduring extreme deprivation and isolation for nearly 10 years that has inflicted a dire humanitarian crisis and socioeconomic conditions at their lowest point since 1967 with poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and despair rampant. Here I must reiterate our appeals for urgent support to UNRWA which leads the effort to alleviate the plight of the vulnerable Palestinian refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza as well as throughout the region, providing them with sustenance and protection amid widespread crisis.

As we bear witness to the global refugee and migrant crisis, it should be recognized that Palestine refugees are among the millions of civilians fleeing our region, especially due to the grave Syrian conflict. We ask you not to forget them, they who have suffered nearly 70 years of exile, dispossession, and misery, and urge you to reaffirm solidarity with them and support for a just solution in accordance with the Resolution 194, which enshrined their right to return, rightly affirmed for all refugees in the New York Declaration.

Mr. President, all of these facts before us confirm that the situation is far from static and the crisis is not manageable as many, including the Israeli government, may like to believe. The situation is in constant decline, is totally unsustainable, and can indeed get worse. In a part of the world already experiencing so much turmoil and radicalization with spillover far beyond its borders, this must be cause for both alarm and action. There is international consensus that, as reflected clearly in the Quartet report, Israel's policies of settlement construction and expansion is eroding the two-state solution and entrenching a one-state reality; a reality that can only be deemed apartheid.

The Quartet has called for serious action to reverse the negative trends on the ground. This must include immediate changes in Israeli policies that are fragmenting our land, undermining our state's viability, violating our people's human rights, and denying them their human dignity. Lip service to the cause of peace is not enough. Empty promises and claimed commitments contracted by every action by Israel must not be accepted in place of actual respect for the law and genuine efforts for peace.

The international community, with the Security Council at the forefront, must consider measures to hold Israel accountable and compel compliance with its legal obligations. Steps must be taken to stop the downward spiral and expedite and end to this illegal 50-year occupation. Action is urgent if there is to be any hope of preserving the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders and creating conditions for meaningful negotiations in all final status issues and tangibly advancing that solution, which all agree is in peril.

Mr. President, continued international appeasement and inaction are indefensible. Current efforts to mobilize this council to act must be supported if we are to confront the main obstacle to peace, particularly illegal Israeli settlement activities, and forge a political horizon in which negotiations based on the long-standing parameters and terms of reference enshrined in the relevant UN resolutions, The Madrid Principles, and The Arab Peace Initiative, and within a set time frame can be accelerated for achievement of a peace agreement that brings a complete end to the Israeli occupation and the independence of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with the State of Israel in peace and security, and a just solution for the Palestine refugee question.

The Palestinian leadership had continually reaffirmed its commitment to peace on this basis and is ready to pursue it in full cooperation with all concerned regional and international partners. We thusly affirm our support for France's efforts to mobilize the international community for Palestinian-Israeli peace and to convene an international peace conference. We also reaffirm our support for efforts by the Arab states to advance the Arab Peace Initiative including in cooperation with the Quartet members, whose recent efforts are also fully recognized along with the Russian and Egyptian efforts to promote dialogue and help the parties overcome the deadlock.

Yet, none of these efforts can absolve the UN of its responsibility. The General Assembly and Security Council must act to ensure that international law is upheld, to thread these collective efforts, and chart a viable path forward. On this day, 69 years of the date of the partition of our homeland, I wish to remind the Assembly that in spite of the grim realities they are enduring, the Palestinian people and leadership are not deterred, and remain insistent on the path of peace.

Just a few months ago in this chamber, a Palestinian teacher, winner of the Global Teacher Prize, stood here among the international messengers of peace proudly representing and reaffirming Palestine's long-standing commitment to peace. Although hopes are diminished, our people hold steadfast to the justness of their cause, and still believe in the law and the international community's pledges to achieve peace and ensure the State of Palestine's rightful place among the community of nations.

From this rostrum, we thus appeal once more that no effort be spared to bring this foreign occupation and tragic conflict to an end; to help the Palestinian people finally realize their long-denied rights, independence, and dignity, and finally establish peace and coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

And I thank you very much, Mr. President.

President of the General Assembly: And I thank the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine. I now give the floor to the Permanent – the Distinguished Permanent Representative of Israel.

State of Israel: Mr. President, every year on this date this chamber holds the same cynical Israel-bashing festival. Every year with speaker after speaker distorting history and promoting a completely one-sided narrative, every year member states pass the same empty resolutions, and this year is no different. Let no one be fooled. None of this does anything to help the Palestinian people. It only continues to feed the Palestinian culture of victimhood. The reality is that this debate on the so-called Question of Palestine avoids the hard questions. Are the Palestinians really ready to make the hard decisions needed for peace? Do they really want to end the conflict? To end a decade of terror and violence against the people of Israel, and to end the diplomatic warfare here in the UN?

For all the talk about new initiatives and new resolutions, we must ask the question, do the Palestinians even want a state? History tells us that the answer is no. Since 1947, the Palestinian leadership has proven time and time again that they don't want a solution. Let's remember what happened on that day 69 years ago: United Nations voted to partition the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state. We all know what happened next. The Jews said yes. The Arabs said no. Simple as that. And today, nothing has changed.

After 69 years, the Palestinians still don't want peace, they still don't want a state, and they still don't want to in the conflict. Every time there's a possibility for progress, every time there's an opportunity to choose a better path for their people, they choose the path of violence, rejection, and bloodshed.

Mr. President, let us not forget that the leaders of the Zionist movement accepted the UN plan despite all the risks, despite the threats of genocide against the Jewish people by Arab leaders. These brave leaders accepted the plan because they knew it offered the best hope for the restoration of Jewish independence after 2,000 years, and because they believed it was possible to live side-by-side with our Arab neighbors in the land of our forefathers.

But the Arab leadership was not willing to accept the Jewish state under any conditions. Make no mistake, this was not about pushing for a better deal. A working paper of the UN Secretariat from July 1949 stated clearly, and I quote, "The Arabs rejected the United Nations partition plan in its entirety." Their goal was clear. This was not about establishing another Arab state. It was and remains about opposition to a homeland for the Jewish people. Just look at the headlines the day after the vote. Assembly votes Palestine partition, Arabs walk out, disavow any partition wall. This is the whole story.

They rejected the plan and launched a war of destruction joined by the armies of five Arab nations. The response was best summed up by the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha. He promised, and I quote, "It will be a war of elimination. It will be a momentous massacre in history that will be talked about like the massacres of the Mongols or the Crusades." This has repeated itself at every stage of history. Israel makes compromises for peace; the Palestinians reject every offer and every plan, and respond with a wave of violence and terror.

From 1948 until 1967, when the territory that we all talk about was under Arab control, the residents did not go to the international forums, and the Arab states didn't lift a finger to create one. The founding charter of the PLO does not call for a Palestinian state. It calls on Arabs, and I quote, "to report the Zionist invasion and to eliminate the Zionist presence from Palestine". Let me read this again. "To report the Zionist invasion and to eliminate the Zionist presence from Palestine."

In 1967, Israel was attacked again on three sides, but defeated three Arab armies. Again, we extended our hand to our neighbors, appealing to them to end the conflict, to end the bloodshed, to end the suffering on both sides once and for all. The Arab world responded with one unequivocal message of rejection, no peace, no recognition, no negotiation.

Mr. President, the history of Palestinian rejectionism is alive and well today. In the year 2000, Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, made an unprecedented and far-reaching offer for a Palestinian state. Believe me, this was very controversial in Israel. It involved very painful compromises on our part. But still, the Palestinian leadership, led by Yasser Arafat, said no. President Clinton urged him to change his mind. Many Arab leaders told him this was a golden opportunity to establish a state, but he refused. And not only did he say no, he encouraged the wave of terror and violence that has not ended to this very day. President Clinton called the decision to reject a state, “an error of historic proportions,” but the Palestinians repeated this mistake eight years later.

Once again, another Israeli leader, Prime Minister Olmert, he offered the Palestinians everything they claimed to want: a state of their own, virtually all the territory in dispute, and the uprooting of the so-called settlements. What was their response? President Abbas said, and I quote, “I did not agree. I rejected it out of hand.” How many times should we be shocked when the Palestinians won’t even consider the most generous offers? How many times do we have to hear, no until we believe it? Every time there was an opportunity to move forward, to chart a path to a better future, the Palestinian leadership rejected it.

Israel has tried everything. In 2005, we dismantled entire communities and uprooted thousands of people from their homes in the Gaza Strip, and also, may I remind you, from parts of Judea and Samaria as well. This was a chance for the Palestinians to prove that their goal was the welfare of their people rather than warfare with Israel. This was an opportunity for the Palestinian leadership, and they threw it away. Instead of building hospitals in Gaza, schools, instead of investing in the future of their people, Gaza became a launching pad to attack Israeli towns and cities with rockets from above and tunnels from below.

Once again, Israel opened the door to peace and the Palestinians slammed it shut. To this day, the Palestinians refuse to assume control over the Gaza border crossings. The Palestinian leadership won’t even take responsibility for the territory and the people they claim to represent because responsibility requires accountability. It requires a practical policy of action. It means saying no to excuses, but making excuses is a policy of the Palestinians. Just think about one of the great lies that, unfortunately, many in this chamber repeated endlessly; time and time again, we hear that settlements are the obstacle to progress, but in 2010, for 10 months, we put a complete freeze on settlement building as a goodwill gesture to advanced talks. For 10 months, not a single apartment or kindergarten or community center was built in Judea and Samaria. That’s a fact. And the Palestinians still refused to even come to the table. That’s also a fact. It’s not about settlements. It never was. The Palestinian rejection began before there was a single settlement and it will continue despite every effort to move forward.

In 2014, U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, led another round of talks. The government of Israel offered deep concessions and got nothing in return from the Palestinians. We took difficult decisions and even released Palestinian prisoners who had murdered innocent Israelis. Just think about it. Just imagine the pain felt by Israelis when they watched these terrorists receive a hero’s welcome from President Abbas. But then, just as the deadline was about to pass, the PA blew up the process by establishing a unity government with Hamas, the internationally recognized terror organization. The PA faced an important decision, to talk peace with Israel or join forces with a terror organization, and they chose terror, another missed opportunity, another rejection, another embrace of the forces of violence.

Mr. President, Israel has tried everything, time after time, more compromises and more concessions, but the Palestinians always had an excuse. There was always something missing, always some reason not to sit down and talk with us. Ask yourself: if the Palestinians really want peace, why do they reject every opportunity? If they really wanted peace, they would have answered Prime Minister Barak and Prime Minister Olmert’s far-reaching proposals. And right now, today, they can answer Prime Minister Netanyahu’s open call for negotiations anytime, anyplace, in New York, in Jerusalem, in Ramallah.

Instead, they focus their time and effort on the political theater we are witnessing here today, empty resolutions and empty speeches, more promises of support, more new initiatives, more UN organizations, and of course, more funding. The PA pays lip service to these initiatives because it pays well. According to the World Bank, they received $2.5 billion in international aid in 2014 and $21.7 billion in development aid since the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993. According to the 2016 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, the Palestinians have been among the top 10 recipients of international funding for over a decade. And they receive 10 times more humanitarian aid per capita than any other people.

Year after year, the international community pours billions of dollars into the PA, an organization which is corrupt from top to bottom. Are we surprised when the money intended to improve the lives of the Palestinian people goes instead to the families in the inner circles of the Palestinian leaders? But it is not just about widespread corruption. Palestinian leadership allocates tens of millions of dollars to finance the Palestinian terror industry. In 2012, the PA paid over $75 million to terrorists in Israeli prisons and $78 million to the families of terrorists, including suicide bombers. Together, this accounts for over 16% of the annual foreign donations advanced to the PA budget.

They try to hide this subsidizing of terror by shifting responsibility to the PLO, but it all comes from the same source and it all goes for the same purpose, to encourage the murder of innocent Jews. Taxpayers around the world should know that their money is helping to fund stabbings, shootings, and suicide bombings. This is where the funding goes, not to building institutions, but to paying PA salaries, to the black hole of the PA corruption, and to paychecks for terrorists. The Palestinians are on permanent welfare provided by the international community, and they have no intention of stopping it.

They want the conflict to continue because they know that others will continue to pay their bills and institutions like this one will continue to conduct a campaign against Israel on their behalf. The Palestinians don’t want an agreement. They don’t want a state. The responsibilities of statehood would mean making hard choices and delivering on their promises to their people. It would mean investing in their own institutions. It would mean putting an end to terror and incitement. It would mean finally recognizing the connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. It would mean making peace. But the Palestinians want easy victories without the responsibilities of governing and they know the only way is to continue the conflict.

Mr. President, it’s time to put an end to this lie once and for all. If the Palestinians really wanted peace, we could’ve had peace. The real goal of the Palestinian Authority is to continue to exist as a corrupt entity living off the goodwill of the international community. For 69 years, the Palestinians have said no to every offer, to every compromise, to every chance for peace. But the more the Palestinians say no, the more the international community says yes.

If you really want to show solidarity with the Palestinian people, then end this charade, shut down the grievance industry and the culture of victimhood, stop the endless stream of resolutions which do nothing to promote peace or help the Palestinian people, and most importantly, condemn the culture of hate and incitement and demand that the Palestinian leaders finally return to the negotiating table. Until this moment comes, Israel will continue to stand strong in defense of our country and the people of Israel will continue to pray for a true and lasting peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President of the General Assembly: And I thank the Distinguished Representative of Israel. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the European Union.

European Union: Thank you, Mr. President. I have the honor to speak on behalf of European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the candidate countries of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association process and potential candidate, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries, Iceland and Lichtenstein, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine.

Mr. President, the European Union is gravely concerned at the trends on the ground threatening the viability of the two-state solution. Over the last months, we have seen an acceleration of negative trends in direct contradiction with quartet recommendations. The risk is to entrench a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples. The European Union has a clear position, set out in our Council conclusions, to pursue the two-state solution, the same two-state solution that, since Oslo, has been identified as the objective of all Israeli governments, of the Palestinian leadership, and of the international committee; a negotiated two-state solution that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict.

This, to us, is a clear position and also, a clear objective, not only of ours, but also that we share with the rest of the international community and of the parties. Mr. President, European Union is extremely concerned by the escalation in violence and tensions in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory. We unequivocally condemn all acts of terror and incitement. They are simply unacceptable. They can never be justified. We insist that all perpetrators of crimes or of acts of terror against the Israelis, as well as against the Palestinians, must be brought to justice.

The response of security forces needs to be proportionate and consistent regardless of who is the perpetrator. Israel must conduct thorough investigations into cases in which lethal force has been used. Alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all sides must be investigated in accordance with international law and standards. Compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by states and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region.

We are also concerned at the recurring tensions at holy sites. Jerusalem is a city sacred to three religions. We renew our calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 in line with previous understandings and with respect to Georgian’s special role. Any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects.

The European Union member states have never recognized the annexation of territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. All discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem must stop. A way must be found, through negotiations, to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.

Mr. President, let me turn to settlements and recall here the long-held position of the European Union. Settlements are illegal under international law, constitutes an obstacle to peace, and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. Since early 2016, and particularly since the publication of the Quartet report, there is an acceleration of Israeli settlement expansion. The steady and systematic acceleration of settlement expansion goes directly against the recommendations of the Quartet report. Other related policies negatively impact on the social economic development of Area C, which is of crucial importance for the viability of a future Palestinian state. Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C, including some funded by the European Union and the European Union member states, have vastly increased in 2016. This has led to evictions and forced transfers, including of Bedouin communities.

We express a particular concern about measures which could amount to collective punishment such as, for instance, punitive home demolitions, the sealing off of Palestinian villages, and withdrawal of work permits. We recall, once more, the applicability of international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians.

The European Union and its member states reaffirm the commitment to ensure continued, full, and effective implementation of existing E.U. legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. We also express our commitment to ensure that, in line with international law, all agreements between the states of Israel and the European Union must unequivocally and explicitly indicate that inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

Settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as a future capital of both states. The E.U. also alarmed by the advancement in Knesset of the Settlement Regularization Bill, which would allow for the exposed legalization of Israeli outposts in the occupied West Bank and de facto confiscation of private Palestinian land. The new legislation would allow for a dramatic expansion of Israeli settlements and would, therefore, critically endanger the contiguity of a future Palestinian state and prospects for a two-state solution.

Mr. President, militant activity and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza seeds general instability and constitute a recipe for renewed conflict. Fundamental improvements in living conditions are needed, particularly as regards the most vulnerable, in particular children and older persons. While all international donors should swiftly honor their pledges made at the Cairo conference, Gaza’s humanitarian needs can only be properly addressed through political progress on the following three tracks.

Firstly, all sides must respect the cease-fire. All indiscriminate attacks are illegal, unacceptable, and increase risks of escalation. The illicit arms buildup by Hamas and other militant groups must stop. We urge all parties to work towards de-escalation of tensions.

Secondly, the European Union urges all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process, on the basis of the PLO platform and Quartet principles. A single legitimate and democratic Palestinian authority with full control over Gaza is critical for fulfilling the national aspirations of the Palestinian people and for achieving a viable Palestinian state. In this context, the European Union encourages the prompt setting of a new date for the planned Palestinian local elections, which if held in line with international standards, could become an important step towards more Palestinian democracy and towards national unity.

Thirdly, we reiterate our call on Israel for an end of the Gaza closure and a full opening of the crossings while addressing its legitimate security concerns. The lifting of restrictions on the movement of people, including for representatives of the international community, services, and goods, particularly those designated as dual use items, is needed to allow reconstruction, service delivery, and international infrastructure projects.

Mr. President, to conclude, the adoption in September of the Israeli-Palestinian electricity agreement was a welcome development. The European Union urges both parties to promote further confidence and trust-building measures. Thank you.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the European Union, and I give the floor now to the representative of Lebanon. You have the floor, sir.

Lebanon: Madam President, next June Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will mark its fiftieth anniversary. We believe that this high time for us all to stop and thoroughly reflect on what has been the outcome of this occupation, on our failure to put an end to it, and on what ought to be done to live up to our obligations under the charter of the United Nations to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

First, one cannot but be struck by the continuing systematic and deliberate expansion of Israeli settlements in occupied the West Bank, particularly in and around East Jerusalem since 1967. As a matter of fact, in the past 50 years the Israeli government has established 131 settlements in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. In total, there are now almost 800,000 Israeli settlers on Palestinian lands, 406,000 in the West Bank, and over 350,000 in East Jerusalem. Here it’s worth noting that the number of settlers has tripled since the peace process began and it’s now estimated that this number could reach 1 million but then the end of the decade according to the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem.

Needless to remind that all these settlements a in flagrant violation of international law, for Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits an occupying power from transferring any part of its own civilian population into a territory it occupies. Moreover, article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court defines such acts as war crimes, and numerous UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 446, 452, and 465, stress that these settlements are illegal and constitute a serious obstruction to peace.

Of course, Israeli attempts to legalize so-called outposts. That is the settlements that have been established since the 1990s without government approval and are considered illegal according to Israeli law, are also all in blatant breach of international law. The number of such so-called outposts, excluding East Jerusalem has reached 97 and their locations are being as strategic frontlines to expand settlements area of control, hence the very serious danger which they represent.

Turning to East Jerusalem now, we need to note that since it was illegally annexed in 1967, Israel’s primary goal has been to a de facto demographic and geographic situation in order to frustrate any further attempts to challenge Israeli alleged sovereignty over the city.

To achieve this goal, the Israeli government has been seeking to alter the historical identity of many landmarks and quarters of the city along with taking actions to increase the number of Jews and reduce the number of Palestinians living in the city. Such as, by imposing broad restrictions on construction inside Palestinian neighborhoods, yet allowing Jewish settlers to move into the heart of these neighborhoods and live their while expelling Palestinians from their homes and demolishing them.

Madam President, in June 2002 the Israeli government began the construction of a wall to encircle the West Bank. Once completed, the length of this wall is projected to be more than twice the length of Israel’s border with the West Bank, as it snakes deep inside the West Bank to encompass many Israeli settlements on the western side. In fact, 85% of the wall runs inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, rather than along the green line. The International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 9, 2004, was crystal clear in stating that the construction of this wall was, and I quote, “an attempt to annex the territory contrary to international law.” End of quote. And that, and I quote again, “the de facto annexation of land interferes with the territorial sovereignty and, consequently, with the rights of Palestinians to self-determination.” End of quote. When finished, the wall, along with Israeli settlements, Israeli-only highways, closed military zones, and so-called nature reserves, are projected to cover 46% of the occupied West Bank, effectively annexing them to Israel.

Madam President, 50 years of Israel occupation are also witness to numerous other illegal policies and human rights violations, including inter alia the demolition of Palestinian homes and other civilian structures, the confiscation of Palestinian land, and the forced eviction and displacement of Palestinian families, the discriminatory allocation of water, and provision of access for land and natural resources and restrictions of movement.

On these policies and violations, the facts and figures speak for themselves. According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, 48,488 Palestinian homes and civilian structures have been demolished by Israel since 1967 either as a form of punitive measure, or as a collateral damage and military incursions, such as in the attacks on Gaza, or still because Israel has refused to grant building permits to Palestinians who are then forced to build illegally on their own land and face demolition.

Since 1967, Israeli authorities have confiscated over 1 million dunams of land, which represent 20% of the West Bank area, including East Jerusalem. It's worth noting in this regard that on April 15, 2015, the Supreme Court of Israel reaffirmed the application of the so-called Absentees Property Law, which allowed the continued confiscation of property in East Jerusalem, whose owners reside in other parts of the West Bank or in Gaza.

Madam President, most of Palestine's natural resources are located in Area C, which constitutes over 60% of the West Bank. And according to the World Bank, $3.4 billion is the estimated boost to the economy every year if Palestinians were able to freely and fully exploit their natural resources in this area. Maybe then the Palestinian Authority would no longer need to rely on development or humanitarian aid.

As to water, Israel controls 100% of the Jordan River basin, and 80% water reserve in the West Bank, accounting for over 25% of its consumption. And since it laid hand on the water resource of the Bank in 1967, thousands of Palestinians have been prevented from developing their water infrastructures and have become water dependent on Israel. It's very telling here to note that while on average each Israeli settler in the West Bank has access to 240 to 300 liters or water per day, Palestinians in the West Bank have access to only 73 liters on average.

Madam President, movement is restricted in the West Bank by almost 600 permanent checkpoints, roadblocks, and earth mounds, let alone the hundreds of flying checkpoints. And how not to mention here the bypass road network defined by OCHA as, and I quote, "a network of roads that are primarily for Israeli use and which connecting Israeli settlements and other infrastructure to each other and to Israel. Palestinian vehicular access into these roads is either restricted or prevented and ultimately diverted. Consequently, these roads have become barriers." No wonder then why some NGOs has qualified these roads as apartheid roads. And let's note that approximately 41,000 acres of Palestinian land has been confiscated in order to sustain this network of 1,661 kilometers of apartheid roads.

Madam President, since 1967 an estimated 750,000 Palestinians, that is up to 20% of the Palestinian population, had at some point been detained by Israeli authorities, including over 95,000 children of which 59,000 are likely to have been subjected to some form of physical violence. Acts of terrorism and violence by Israeli settlers, including harassment and intimidation against Palestinian civilians, have also escalated in recent years. However, when it comes to such settler acts, impunity prevails as only 1.9% of complaints submitted by Palestinians against settler's attacks have resulted in any form of conviction.

Madam President, we must now admit that our condemnations for 50 years in this assembly, all of these illegal acts, even when expressed in the strongest terms as we say in our the diplomatic jargon, have all failed to put an end to the continued Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine. It's high time that you move in the United Nations beyond such mere condemnations in this assembly. It is the UN Security Council that should shoulder its responsibilities by enforcing its own resolutions relating to the illegality of settlement activities, and by calling for concrete measures to put an end to the occupation of the State of Palestine according to a clear and binding time frame.

Madam President, to turn this into a reality, I would I like to ask you in conclusion to reflect on the following words of great wisdom uttered by a great man, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and I quote, "If apartheid ended, so can the occupation. But the moral force and international pressure will have to be just as determined." Allow me to repeat it one more time. "If apartheid ended," says Bishop Desmond Tutu, "so can the occupation. But the moral force and international pressure will have to be just as determined." Thank you.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Lebanon. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait. You have the floor, sir.

Kuwait: Madam President, may you be blessed by God. Our debate on the Palestinian Question, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, concedes with the celebration by the Committee on the Inalienable Rights to Exercise the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People with International Day of Solidarity for the Palestinian People. And I'm really here wish to welcome the work of the Committee to commemorate this event for the Palestinians to return to this land and to East Jerusalem.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban ki-Moon, for his submission of the reports, in particular the report contained in document A/71/359, which is entitled, the Settlement of the Palestinian Cause by Peaceful Means; peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine given the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories because of the flagrant and gross violations of international humanitarian and international laws and human rights and the practices of the occupying force.

Madam Chairman, the report describes a humanitarian situation which is reprehensible in the occupied territories, and this should prompt us to act quickly to help the Palestinian people to deal with the injustice and occupation, and the warlike policy of the Israeli authorities to change the nature and the geography of the Palestinian people by forced displacements, the confiscation of land and property, and just flying in the face of international customs. The State of Kuwait supports the efforts made by the international community to reach a lasting comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem, which is based on the Arab Peace Initiative, on international law, and the resolutions of international equality.

And here we welcome the initiative made by France to have an international conference, an international peace conference, a conference which would lead to an international mechanism that would be multilateral, leading to an elimination of the illegal settlements and the Israeli – Israel's occupation in the Palestinian lands in the framework of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, which would make it possible for the Palestinian people to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital within the prior pre-1967 boundaries.

We understand that there are illegitimate efforts to combat this, and the siege of the Gaza Strip and the restrictions of the people and merchandise, the confiscation of land, all of these things are policies which are directed towards training the people, and Madam President, in this context I would like to recall the position of the State of Kuwait, a position of principle. The Palestinian cause is always in the mind of things dealt with at the United Nations of a people that's suffer for decades of occupation, a people deprived of the most fundamental rights is something which is – should have dignity and liberty.

Our position can be summarized as follows. First of all, we recognize the struggle of the Palestinian people, and its efforts to fulfill its political legitimate rights, namely the creation of an independent state on its own land with East Jerusalem as its capital. And there must be a deadline to put an end to Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territory.

Secondly, we denounce the continued illegal inhuman siege of the Gaza blockade, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the flagrant violation of the resolution [indiscernible] and in violation Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The siege must be – the blockade must be ended to release the prisoners and detainees of the Palestinians. There must be an international committee, a fact-finding commission and to have an investigation into the situation in the prisons in Israel, and to check respect by Israel of the rules of international law.

Fourth, we are in favor of the request from Israel to sit as a full member as of the United Nations, to achieve a full and complete settlement of the Palestinian conflict. We also support the determination of the State of Palestine to exceed to the international organizations and conventions in accordance with their own rights. Fifth, we call upon the international bodies, including the Security Council, to provide international protection for the Palestinian people to defend against Israel.

Sixth, there must be a peace operation in the Middle East to continue the efforts agreed to and to have Israel abide by the resolutions and international law. Here we recall the responsibility of the United Nations and its organs, vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause, including an equitable and comprehensive settlement of all the questions which relate, particularly to the question of refugees.

Madam President, to conclude, we wish to stress the importance for the Security Council to assume its responsibilities, to have its resolutions implemented, and to oblige Israel to put an end to its flagrant violations of international law in the occupied territories and to apply the resolutions of the United Nations, including the Security Council resolutions and the various resolutions of the Security Council to succeed in there being a lasting and just peace in the Middle East.

Thank you.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait. And I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Jordan. You have the floor, madam.

Jordan: Madam Chair, I would like to extend my wholehearted thanks to the chair and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their important role and their continuing endeavors throughout the past years to promote international attention to the rights of the Palestinian people, to their cause, and highlighting the injustice and suffering they’re facing.

Today marks an annual opportunity to draw the attention of the United Nations and the entire international community to the Palestinian Question as we renew our pledge of continuous support thereto. Again, we underpin the importance of granting the Palestinian people their inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination, independence, sovereignty, and the right of the Palestinian displaced persons and refugees to return to their territory and property.

Notwithstanding the moral significance of this day, the bitter reality of the ongoing Israeli occupation and the recurrent violations by the Israeli authorities in the Palestinian occupied territories require more than celebrating The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Concrete measures should rather be taken to bring the Israeli occupation to an end and to stop its ongoing violations which pose precarious threats to the two-state solution and which undermine all opportunities to reach a lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

Settlement activities is one of the most significant things that we have – risks that we have to tackle in addition to demolition of houses, the displacement of the Palestinians, and the raids against holy sites, and this is not only a red line for Jordan and Palestine, it is rather a red line for the two nations and the Arab and Islamic nations. And in this regard, I would like to reiterate our absolute commitment to continue our legal and historical right in protecting the Aqsa Mosque and the Haram al-Sharif in coordination with our brothers in the State of Palestine, and this emanates from the historical Hashemite guardianship of His Majesty King Abdullah II, son of the venerated Al-Hussein, over Islamic and Christian holy places in al-Quds and the principal right of Jordan to safeguard the same.

And we have to reiterate the importance of this day, as it gives a political value of the effective and positive involvement to reach a peaceful solution of the Palestinian cause, especially that of the political scene in the Middle East reiterates that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict comes at the heart of the tensions in the region and it requires a lasting, just and comprehensive peace that is based on the two-state solutions as well as the international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Notwithstanding the growing international support of the Palestinian cause, still Israel ignores and is indifferent to the will of the international community to put an end to settlements or to lift the siege on the Gaza Strip and to put an end to the daily violations of the Palestinian rights. And given the status quo and the impasse, we have to double our efforts and to consider new prospects to bring Israel to put an end to its occupation of the Palestinian territories. This is the only pathway for Israel security acceptability in the region.

In this regard, Jordan supports the international efforts that are taking credible, concrete steps, including procedures to build trust between the Palestinian and the Israeli parties and to work towards the creation of conducive, peaceful environment to resume serious negotiations with the objective of peace for both peoples. We reaffirm the importance of the protection of the Palestinian people and we do support that the year 2017 should be considered the international year to end Israeli occupation of Palestine. Also, we reiterate the importance of the Palestinian unity and to conciliation between the various Palestinian factions which would eventually promote the Palestinian requirements before the international community to achieve independence and to establish their viable future state on the borders of 1967 with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

The Palestinian cause does not stop short at the establishment of the Palestinian state or to put an end to the settlements. Actually, at the heart of the Palestinian Question is the destiny of an entire people who have their human value and dignity that deserves to be maintained, and Jordan believes that it’s inevitable to recognize the extorted and the violated rights of the Palestinians, which are eventually recognized by the international resolutions. Every single year, we grow more determined to exert more efforts in the various international fora to return and to recover the rights of the Palestinian people, and we cannot deny that in the absence of justice and the ongoing occupation as all the oppression the Palestinian people is one of the main reasons for the spread of extremist ideologies.

Our support of – to the Palestinian people will not stop short at this day. The defense of their rights comes at the heart of our regional and international efforts. Also, our solidarity with the Palestinian people and drawing the attention of the world to the suffering that the Palestinian people go through does not stop short at those who are steadfast in the Palestinian territories. We have also to consider the millions who have been forcibly displaced and evicted and who are now refugees and displaced for decades. Eventually, the international community should shoulder its responsibility and humanitarian and ethical duty of delivering the Palestinian people from their suffering and ensuring their right to return and reparations and to put an end to the Israeli violations of the international law and their aversion from the implementation of the relevant international resolutions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Jordan. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of India. You have the floor, sir.

India: Madam President, thank you for convening this important discussion on the Question of Palestine and the General Assembly as we mark The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Madam President, may I draw attention to the message from the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, that he has issued on this important occasion? In his message, Prime Minister Modi has reaffirmed India’s support for the cause of Palestine and solidarity with the Palestinian people for their struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united state of Palestine, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side, at peace with Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He has stated that India will continue to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine by extending technical and financial assistance.

India has been actively helping Palestine in its reconstruction process through various kinds of project assistance. India also contributes annually to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) Fund. India has recently enhanced its annual contribution to UNRWA USD $1.25 million. Five projects are also being undertaken in Palestine from the India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Fund. India reiterates its advocacy for peaceful dialogue between Palestine and Israel and is hopeful of its early resumption. On this important day, Prime Minister has further conveyed that our best wishes will remain with the people of State of Palestine on their journey in achieving the objectives of a just cause.

Madam President, earlier this month, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. M.J. Akbar, visited Palestine for the first meeting of the India-Palestine Joint Commission. This Joint Commission will facilitate further cooperation in a range of sectors, including information technology, security, youth affairs and sports, education, health, agriculture, tourism, and culture. During his visit, the foundation stone was laid for a $12 million techno park project in Ramallah. The project aims to contribute to Palestine’s economy, create jobs for the Palestinian youth, and facilitate expertise in the digital sector.

Madam President, India appreciates the commendable work done by UNRWA over the last seven decades. India contributed $4 million to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. The government of India also helped set up two vocational training centers in Yattah and Hebron. The India-Palestine Center for Excellence in ICT and Innovation in Al-Quds University, Abu Dees, and its satellite center in Ramallah are fully functional now, and in July 2016 the first batch of students graduated from the center.

More than 12,000 Palestinians have so far graduated from Indian universities. India offers 100 training slots in a range of sectors annually to Palestinians. This is in addition to 25 scholarships for higher education. India has also offered training to Palestinian security forces, its customs officials and diplomats.

Madam President, regrettably, the security situation continues to deteriorate and the imperative need is of restraint and moderation. We firmly believe that dialogue is the only viable option in the search for a just, durable, and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. We hope that both sides will demonstrate the necessary political will to return to the negotiations.

I thank you, Madam President.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of India. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Maldives. You have the floor, sir.

Republic of Maldives: Thank you, Madam President. The Republic of Maldives wishes to express its continued appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations and Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as well as the Committee for the commendable work in the discharge of their mandate.

The Republic of Maldives expresses its grave concern regarding escalating tensions in Palestine following the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This report characterizes the further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, during the reporting period from October 2015 to October 2016. The report also raised serious concerns about the protection of civilians, including children.

Madam President, we have observed a series of worrying events and trends emerging since the surge in violence that began in October 2015 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. During the escalation of violence, more than 230 Palestinians and 32 Israelis had been killed. In addition, the Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict issued in April 2016 also highlights the increasing number Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israeli occupying forces and prosecuted by juvenile military codes in the West Bank.

At the end of 2015, 422 Palestinian minors under the age of 18 were held in detention by the Israeli authorities with at least 116 of those between the ages of 12 and 15. The response of the Israeli authorities to offenses by Palestinian minors is frequently with disproportionate and deadly force.

Madam President, violence begets violence. Situations of hopelessness, desolation, and despair can only breed contempt that will eventually manifest in violence. Lasting peace will not and cannot be assured unless the hope of a peaceful future is secured for all the children of the region. The Maldives condemns the continued use of administrative detention, punitive demolitions, movement restrictions, and other measures continued to negatively affect the human rights of the Palestinian people on a continuous basis as reported by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Israeli occupying forces continued to carry out frequent military raids and incursions injuring and killing hundreds of Palestinians, including children, with more than 6,000 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons and detention centers.

Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women has noted that specific groups of women in Israel, including women from Palestinian minority, asylum-seekers, and refugees face accrued and multiple forms of this discrimination and heightened risk of violence.

Israeli authorities have repeatedly denied permission per request by the Special Rapporteur to conduct a mission to the occupied Palestinian territory. In addition, the Special Rapporteur noted in his report A/71/554 that the two preceding mandate holders were similarly not granted access. The Maldives affirms that these missions by the Special Rapporteur are essential to comprehensively and independently undertake a fact-finding mission towards constructing an analysis on the cruel human rights condition on the ground.

Madam President, the Maldives notes with concern the increase in house demolitions by the Israeli military offensive in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the new Israeli legislation being developed, which would enable confiscation of privately owned Palestinian lands and legally repurpose more than 100 outposts in the occupied West Bank for Israeli settlement. Enacting this legislation could violate international law while undermining the Palestinian right to self-determination, violate their right to property, freedom of movement, and development. Similarly, the situation in Gaza remains dire, and there is an urgent need to reconstruct the thousands of houses destroyed. However, the continued Israeli blockade of Gaza has prevented this long-overdue reconstruction and continues to obstruct the movement of persons and goods including critical humanitarian aid. The Maldives, therefore, urges the UN community to identify concrete steps to remove the blockades, and allow the improvement of such conditions.

The Maldives welcomes the continued work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance, in spite of serious financial challenges. In the last year, relief was provided to over 1.2 million refugees, primarily in the occupied Palestinian territory and Syria. And we urge the international community to support the organization in its humanitarian work.

Madam President, 23 years ago, the first Oslo Accord was signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Both countries recognized each other and laid the groundwork towards a solution based on two independent states. However, the reality is that two years have passed since the process of negotiations have been interrupted leading to indisputable marginalization of the two-state solution.

The Maldives calls on all parties involved to work coherently to unlock the peace process. In order for the two states to coexist, making progress towards reconciliation without preconditions is essential. The Maldives is a firm supporter of the two-state solution recognizing the sovereign and independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and anchored in the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties in order to achieve lasting peace.

On 29th November, the countries of the world come together to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Maldives urges the international community to move beyond rhetoric towards enacting steps towards concrete, lasting peace in the region to stand in support with the Palestinian people.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Maldives. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Cuba. You the floor, madam – sir.

Cuba: Madam President, before beginning my comments, I wish to express a great deal of appreciation on behalf of my delegation and our government and the Cuban people with regard to the very moving words and the respect expressed to the president and leader of the Cuban Revolution. He was not only a friend, but a tireless warrior for self-determination for the rights of the Palestinian people. To you and to all – everyone here, I wish to express our appreciation for the message and respect given to the Cuban people.

Madam President, we appreciate, wish to thank Ambassador Fodé Seck, the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable rights of the Palestinian People for the report and for his introduction of the report. And we wish to thank also the European Union for what was – for the rapporteur, for what the rapporteur said. The many violations of international law, in particular the humanitarian law and the human rights committed by Israel, the occupying power in the context of the almost 50 years of occupation – foreign military occupation of the occupied Palestinian people including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan since 1967 has persisted and have grown in the period under consideration.

Israel has kept up all of its illegal practices and policies in a deliberate and systematic way, and this has led to widespread human suffering and destabilization of the situation. And this has included the death and wounding of Palestinian civilians in a sustained cycle of violence, the arrest and detention of Palestinian individuals, including children, the displacement and attempts to achieve forced removal of Palestinian, provocations and instigation in particular in occupied East Jerusalem, and a wide range and network of collective punishments.

Israel has continued its campaign of both establishing illegal settlements in all of the West Bank including East Jerusalem. In the past year, the construction and expansion of the settlements and the wall, the movement of Israeli settlers, the confiscation of land and natural resources, the demolition of housing, the forced displacement of the civilian population – the civilians has stepped up. And this has led to the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and has seriously affected the viability of the two-state solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

The critical situation resulting from the blockade of the Gaza Strip from air, land, and sea as mentioned in the report, reflects the fact that this blockade predisposes the near-total isolation and great depravation for the 2 million Palestinian civilians who live there. In Gaza, there is still a serious humanitarian crisis, and the socioeconomic conditions have fallen to the lowest levels since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. And this has led to an extremely difficult and unsustainable situation, which requires an immediate solution.

Madam President, Cuba has historically maintained its firm commitment and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. We have maintained the position of principle, which is clear and unequivocal in favor of the self-determination. We support vigorously all of the efforts directed towards promoting a just and lasting solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, which requires clearly the exercise of the true inalienable right of the Palestinian people to build their own state within the pre-1967 borders with a capital in East Jerusalem.

In addition, Cuba wishes to reiterate its call to put an end to the prolonged and illegal occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories, the lifting immediately, unconditionally, and completely of the cruel and illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the opening of border crossings and checkpoints to make possible free access for humanitarian aid and the provision and movement of persons from and to the Gaza Strip. The illegal actions by Israel constitute a grave violation of international law and show once again the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem and other Arab territories under Israeli occupation since 1967. And it requires that Israel except the applicability de jure of the convention.

This policy, which if it is continued by Israel, is contrary to the objectives of the peace process. In this whole scenario, one must not overlook the fact that solutions must also be found to the situations that arise geographically and have an impact on the possibility to achieve peace. A comprehensive solution that is just and lasting must be found to the question of the city of Jerusalem that takes into account the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and also to bear in mind the legislation jurisdiction administration by Israel whether in Jerusalem or the occupied Syrian Golan that these are not null and void.

They are not only null and void, but also they are contrary to the search for a peace process. In this context, we believe that it is extremely necessary to continue working here at the United Nations to make a contribution to find greater clarity in the international – within the international community with regard to the dangers that continue to grow both in Palestine and in the Middle East by the failure to find a just and lasting solution between – to end the conflict of both countries. The commendable work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People must continue. The division – the secretariat division on Palestinian rights must continue to provide its contribution, which is useful and constructive to creating awareness at the international level of the Question of Palestine and the urgent need to achieve a peaceful settlement to this question.

Therefore, in accordance with – as our minister of foreign affairs proposed in his message today in solidarity with the Palestinian people, the international community must not remain passive in the face of these abuses and violations. And we appeal to all states members of the United Nations to make every possible effort to resume and support a process that ensures just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on the two-state solution with the internationally recognized pre-1967 borders, taking into account the Arab Peace Initiative.

In addition, as our minister also indicated in his message, the Security Council must adopt without delay practical measures so that Israel puts an end to its aggression against the Palestinian people and that it is accountable for the crimes of aggression, collective punishment, arbitrary detention, massive imprisonments, and genocide committed against this people. It is important to the Security Council must take a decision and recognize a request as a state – the member of the United Nations submitted by Palestine in 2011 is the desire of the immense majority of states, the historic debt to the Palestinian people is huge and it must be paid. Cuba wishes to reaffirm its firm solidarity with the Palestinian people and its determination to continue supporting it in its legitimate struggle for justice, dignity, and in defending its inalienable right to self-determination and sovereignty in an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Cuba. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Nicaragua. You have the floor, Madam.

Nicaragua: Thank you, Madam President, my friend. Madam President, on behalf of the people and government of Nicaragua, on behalf of President and Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra, we welcome this 29th of November, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Nicaragua aligns itself with the statement on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Rights of the Palestinian People. And also, the report that was submitted by the ambassador, by the Rapporteur of our Committee, Ambassador Inguanez. Now, since the revolution, the success of the popular Sandinista revolution in 1979, Nicaragua recognized officially the Palestinian state, and we opened our diplomatic representation with them. And we've enhanced our brotherly relationships of cooperation and solidarity between our peoples. And for many years we have been struggling for their national liberation.

We are proud to celebrate more than four decades of friendship and solidarity. And during that period, Nicaragua has recognized the combat of the Palestinian people as its own combat, and we share the suffering and the same oppression. And since we achieved peace, we have been committed to ensure it also for the Palestinian people. And we also always remember that in our most difficult moments, they were with us, alongside us. Allow me to quote the words of our President and pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the independence of Palestine on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

I quote, "I'd like to take this opportunity to re-express our solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people. In a stoic manner, they have resisted aggression and violations of their rights, and we are confident with the help of God, soon we will be able to establish through dialogue and negotiation the basis for a lasting solution and international recognition of Palestine and its fully fledged membership of the United Nations."

Madam President, in solidarity and in commitment and through our fraternal relationships, we recognize the initiative of the Palestinian leaders to declare the year 2017 as the year to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. We reiterate our support to initiatives which ensure that Palestine has its right to a sovereign state according its 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to allow the two states, Palestine and Israel, to live in peace, harmony, and prosperity.

Nicaragua welcomes the initiatives of the Russian Federation, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the Egyptian and French initiatives. We regret Israel's rejection of participating in the peace conference. This shows that Israel is not interested whatsoever in a negotiated solution which will be fair and lasting. It's vital to put an end to the occupation, and to demand the immediate end to the building of settlements, and an end to the criminal blockade of Gaza, and the complete release of all Palestinian prisoners.

The Security Council, Madam President, which has been an obstruction to this two-state solution by the use and abuse of the veto by one of the permanent members that also are promoting Israel's impunity, continues to perpetuate the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, and the suffering of more than 5.5 million Palestinian refugees throughout the world.

We're in full solidarity with them all. In these times when it's urgent to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieving sustainable development goals, Palestine as all us states, has the right to receive development assistance and investment. But if we allow this vicious circle to continue on the part of Israel with its massive destruction and its massacres, then the international community's assistance will only help to ensure that these people survive, merely survive. So we encourage Member States to ensure that the necessary funds are available for the United Nations' refugee program in the Middle East, UNRWA, and also UNCTAD in its efforts to continue to record the costs of the occupation.

Nicaragua and the Palestinian state have just signed in this year, 2016, a memorandum of understanding in order to enhance steps which benefit both peoples and governments, with a view to the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, and for establishing peace and the rule the law, and enhancing communication and information technology, and also to promote health, education. And this is very important exchange of experiences between the young people of both nations. We will continue to fight until Palestine enjoys its independence, it sovereignty, and its freedom, and that it be recognized as a fully-fledged member of the United Nations.

Thank you very much, Madam President.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Nicaragua, and I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Argentina. You have the floor, sir.

Argentina: Thank you, Madam President. Argentina would like to make a statement related to the situation in the Middle East and the Question of Palestine, Items 34 and 35 of the Agenda of the General Assembly, which my country follows with great concern.

Nearly 70 years have passed since the establishment of the State of Israel and the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 181, which established the plan for the partition of Palestine, and almost 50 years since the beginning of the occupation of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. Since them, we have seen numerous peace initiatives from The Madrid Conference in 1991, to the unsuccessful attempt of resuming negotiations in 2013, none of which have accomplished a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace on the basis of the two-state solution with a State of Israel and a State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders, and what the parties determined in the negotiation process.

Notwithstanding the efforts made during these years, the situation continues to characterized by a recurring cycle of violence and intolerance without a short-term horizon for progress. And for that reason, it is urgent to renew efforts aimed at reversing the current negative trends on the ground through constructive signals from both parties and a responsible and committed action of the Security Council.

Madam President, Argentina confirms its support for the right of the Palestinian people to become an independent and viable state, recognized by all nations, as well as the right of a State of Israel to live in peace with its neighbors within secure and internationally recognized borders. Moreover, Argentina wishes to reiterate its concern about the persistent and continuous growth of the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestine – Palestinian territories and calls upon it to cease its expansion. As has been indicated repeatedly by the General Assembly, the settlements are contrary to international law and are an obstacle for peace. The settlements weaken the possibilities for a two-state solution living in peace and promotes the perpetuation of an unsustainable status quo.

Argentina considers it inadmissible that Hamas and other Palestinian groups launch attacks on Israeli citizens – civilians. The launch of rockets against Israel from the Gaza Strip must end immediately. My country condemns in the strongest terms all terrorist acts, and is convinced that in the same manner that there is no military solution to the conflict, neither is there a terrorist solution. It is necessary for the Palestinian leaders sincerely to address the security concerns of Israel.

At the same time, when note with concern that the Israeli response to the situations is almost entirely focused on security aspects, including cases of excessive use of force by Israeli forces in the context of attacks and alleged attacks conducted by Palestinians, and in combat as well as continued violence of settlers. Regarding the situation of East Jerusalem, Argentina reaffirms the special status of Jerusalem in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in that respect, it rejects any unilateral attempt to change this, in particular with respect to the Old City, the one which has special meaning for the three monotheistic religions.

My country understands that the Holy City should be a place of encountering peace and that access to holy sites must be guaranteed for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Any attempt aimed at denying or relativizing the historical link with, and the profound meaning of those places for the three religions is completely unacceptable and does not contribute to the objective of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict by reinforcing negative prejudices and mistrust between the parties.

In a world which continues to be witness to cross-border terrorist acts, we consider that the achievement of a lasting solution to the Palestinian Question will significantly contribute to the stability of this region, this part of the world, which is in such upheaval. For that reason, we deplore the inflammatory rhetoric of the extremists of both sides. And for this reason, collective efforts are required to work for a two-state solution as established in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, as well as by the Roadmap and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Madam President, my country's identity has been shaped by interaction among communities of different origins, ethnicities and religions, where Christians, Jews, and Muslims live together in harmony. It was an Argentinian Israeli musician, also Palestinian by adoption, Daniel Barenboim, who founded the West- East Divan Orchestra to promote intercultural dialogue through music. Last February of this year, the Secretary-General designated the orchestra as a global advocate of the United Nations for cultural understanding as an acknowledgment of its contribution for breaking barriers and building bridges between communities. The orchestra is a proof that dialogue among different communities is possible and necessary.

Being aware that nothing is simple and nothing happens overnight, Argentina would like to call upon Palestinians and Israelis to resume peace talks, acting with goodwill, with flexibility, and in accordance with international law with a view to reaching an agreement on the pending questions regarding the final status of Palestine in all its aspects.

Thank you, Madam President.

President of the General Assembly: I thank that the Distinguished Representative of Argentina. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Uruguay. You have the floor, sir.

Uruguay: Thank you, Madam President. As we commemorate one more anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we echo what has been said today by the members of this organization who wish that soon we can be witnesses of the wished for peace, which allows these people to enjoy their legitimate right to be part of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state.

Almost 70 years ago, this General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which sought the partition of Palestine and the creation of an Arab state and a Jewish state. Uruguay strongly supported that solution. We were convinced that this would allow Israel and Palestine live in peace and safe, secure borders. Today, Uruguay wishes to reassert our support to the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within safe and internationally recognized borders in renewed cooperation and free from any threat or any act which could undermine peace. Also, Uruguay reiterates its support to the two-state solutions, two independent states. We are convinced that this is the only way which will allow for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine.

Madam President, Uruguay has strongly strong links of friendship with the State of Israel and with the Palestinian state and their full – a membership this organization and the full self-determination of the people is the logical consequence of the process that has been underway since this was recognized as a fully fledged state, a state which is responsible, which can fully eliminate terrorism from its territory and live in peace with the State of Israel and with other states in the region. Under this belief, Uruguay, we early recognized the State of Israel and at a later date, when we joined this inconclusive process, and we recognized the State of Palestine, and this was shared by many states in Latin America. We have embassies in Israel and Palestine, and both have embassies in Uruguay.

It’s essential that the international community should step up its efforts to help this process and to bring these parties to the negotiation table with a view to a peaceful, lasting and negotiated and lasting solution in line with international law and which provides for the interest of both parties. In this regard, the parties should create the necessary conditions for the full implementation of the recommendations of the most recent report of the Quartet, for the renewal of negotiations before them, and also they should take political steps which show their strong commitment to the two-state solution. Similarly, it’s vital that the parties should abstain from any unilateral decisions which prevent dialogue and that they should meet their obligations under international law.

Madam President, Uruguay continues to be concerned by the decisions of the Israeli authorities to build settlements and housing in those settlements. These settlements are illegal under international law and they go against the recommendations of the Quartet on the Middle East. Uruguay encourages Israel to abstain from continuing the illegal settlements and the confiscation of land and destruction of Palestinian homes. Also, we’re concerned at the incitement to violence and the glorification of terrorist acts.

It’s vital that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities should send clear political signals to emerge from the vicious circle of confrontations which has brought violence to the region more than two years. The last military conflict in the Gaza Strip has left thousands of dead and wounded and led to destruction. This humanitarian situation is intolerable and this is worsened by the blockade. And this is based on the impatience and despair of almost 2 million peoples living in poverty, unemployment and the lack of hope in their future.

Uruguay’s concerned at seeing that the solution to a – the two-state solution is still not being achieved. Therefore, we reiterate our readiness to continue to work to relaunching the peace process through all the existing initiatives to overcome the obstacles and to achieve, in this manner, progress in the peace negotiations.

Thank you, Madam President.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Uruguay. And I give the floor now to the Distinguished Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. You have the floor, sir.

Islamic republic of iran: In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful, Madam President, while we commend the United Nations system, the Secretariat, and those helpful and supportive Member States for their tireless efforts to reduce the plight of the Palestinian people, however, we note with grave concern the latest disturbing developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, as reflected in documents under consideration today. We regret that the efforts made so far by the international community have mostly failed or proven inadequate due to the intransigence of the part of the Israeli regime and its continued unlawful and criminal acts and policies against the people of Palestine.

For decades, year after year, the United Nations have condemned Israel for the various crimes it commits against Palestine and its people in occupied Palestinian territory. But this occupying regime, which enjoys undeserved support from a handful of allies, continues to disregard and disrespect the persistent demands by the international community to abide by international law. It is unfortunate that a host of criminal practices and policies are being perpetrated by Israel with impunity and the international community has yet to take any measure to address them.

The systematic violation of the rights of the Palestinian people, including demolition of homes, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, arrest and detention of Palestinians, including children, and incessant violence, terror and provocations by Israeli settlers and extremists, including at sensitive religious sites, particularly al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem have persisted unabated. At the same time, imposition of illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip is continuing to cause massive depravation and hopelessness and fueling a grave humanitarian crisis.

As such, Israel deliberately and systematically violates each and every basic norm of the international law, including international humanitarian law. The increasing number of illegal settlements in the Palestinian territory, which constitute not only great breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but constitute war crimes, have long demonstrated that Israel has never had any interest in peace with Palestinians. The adverse impact of the Israeli occupation and violations of rules and principles of international law are immense and have inflicted unbearable hardship on all aspects of the lives of Palestinians, including from a socioeconomic perspective.

Madam President, as in the past, the situation in Palestine requires urgent international attention and action. The continued illegal and brutal Israeli occupation not only causes so much misery to the Palestinian people, it also lies at the origin of the various tensions in the Middle East and is dangerously inflaming them in the volatile situation in the region with far-reaching and serious consequences for international peace and security. While the Israeli criminal acts and policies are worsening and can at any moment trigger further crisis, the extremely fragile situation on the ground must be seriously addressed to avert further destabilization.

Regrettably, and despite the clear global consensus on the illegality of Israeli policies and practices on Palestinian territory, the Security Council continues to be paralyzed, failing to uphold its obligations. This should change. The Security Council should shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and international law to compel Israel to respect the norms of international law, including the international humanitarian law, and to end its war crimes and human rights violations against the Palestinian people and end its illegal occupation of the Palestinian land and the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

Madam President, I would like to conclude by reiterating the unwavering support of the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the oppressed Palestinian nation. Once again, we assume – we assure them that we will do whatever in our power to help them realize the cause of a free and prosperous Palestine.

I thank you, Madam President.

President of the General Assembly: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Colleagues, we have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall continue the debate tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. in this hall. So stay dry, and the meeting is adjourned.

November 30, 2016

**71st Session 50th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly**

Chair: The Distinguished Delegates the 50th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly is called to order.

The General Assembly will continue its consideration of Agenda item 35, entitled Question of Palestine. We will continue with the list of speakers and now I will give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Bahrain. You have the floor, Madam.

Kingdom of Bahrain: In the name of God, the Compassionate and the Merciful. Mr. President, I have the honor to deliver a statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations. Mr. President, on this occasion, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain (may God protect him), sent a letter of solidarity with the Palestinian people to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he said, and I quote, “The international Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people reflects the attention that that United Nations and the international community attach to the Question of Palestine and their solid commitment to meeting the legitimate aspirations of Palestinians and to grant them their rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to establish their own independent state similarly to other peoples of the world.”

His Majesty said, and I quote, “The Kingdom of Bahrain has always stressed its support to the establishment of a state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. We have always called on the international community to make every effort to grant the Palestinian people its inalienable rights and to achieve a just and comprehensive peace according to relevant UN resolutions, including Security Council Resolutions 242 of 1967, 338 of 1973, 3097 of 2002, and 1515 of 2003 on the two-state Solution and on the terms of reference of the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative. All of these instruments call for the full withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and from all Arab territories occupied since 1967. They also call for granting the Palestinian people its inalienable rights.”

Mr. President, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of Senegal, and to all members of the Committee for their valuable report before the Assembly in Document A/71/35. I would also like to express my appreciation to all of the members for their constant efforts to ensure the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to allow Palestinians to put an end to the occupation and to establish their own independent state on their land with Jerusalem, or East Jerusalem, as its capital.

Mr. President, the report reflects the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including with regards to the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people. These rights are inalienable and fundamental rights according to Security Council Resolution 237 of 1967.

This outrageous deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as detailed in the report is the result of the annexation and settlement policy and the continued construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and around Jerusalem.

We reiterate our thanks to the committee and to the Division for Palestinian Rights for the activities carried out over the past period, detailed in the report. These activities include the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem and Jakarta on the 14th and 15th of December 2015; the UN Civil Society Forum on the Question of Palestine entitled A Civil Society in Support of Justice in Palestine and to End Occupation on the 16th of December in Jakarta; as well as the roundtable on the legal aspects of the Question of Palestine in Amman from the 15th to the 17th of March 2016; the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem in Dakar on the 3rd and 4th of May 2016; and the UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Stockholm on the 19th and 20th of May; as well as other activities that seek to raise awareness of this just cause.

We would also like to thank the Department of Public Information for its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine and for its training program held annually for Palestinian journalists and its call on all UN information centers to carry out activities on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and other similar activities.

Mr. President, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its firm position in support of the Palestinian question, to meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people, to achieve a comprehensive, just, and durable peace that will guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of their own independent state with Jerusalem as its capital on all territories occupied in 1967 in a manner that would ensure the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland according to international terms of reference as well as the Arab Peace Initiative as the only genuine solution that would lay the foundations for peace in the region.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Bahrain for her statement. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Pakistan. Your Excellency, you have the floor, Madam.

Pakistan: Thank you, Mr. President. We commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people every year. Yet for far too long this day has become a somber and grim reminder of the unending suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of an occupier who has shown utter disregard for the principles of international law and the morals of humanity. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential for peace and stability throughout the Middle East. It is also essential to enable us to address some of the drivers of extremism and terrorism. It is this conflict that has contributed most significantly to the anger and frustration in the Arab and the Islamic world. The continued spread of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, the blockade of Gaza, the provocations around the holy al-Aqsa Mosque, and the continued imprisonment of Palestinians are all real and present obstacles to a two-state solution.

These actions, along with the recent proclamations emanating from Israel that a two-state solution no longer needs to be pursued, reflect a willful defiance of the international consensus that the only viable option for durable peace lies in such a solution. They’re also a testimony to the fact that the occupying power is being emboldened by the lack of resolute action by the international community.

Mr. President, the 5.2 million Palestinian refugees forcibly displaced from their homes nearly 70 years ago and denied their inalienable right to return are a travesty of justice and morality. Their right to return is pivotal to the vision of a peaceful and a stable Middle East. Expropriation of Palestinian lands and continued expansion of illegal settlements in occupied territory is another egregious Israeli inequity in total defiance of its international obligations.

The so-called Legalization Bill in the Israeli parliament aims at providing a veneer of legality to this shameless land grab. Demolition of Palestinian homes and expulsion of Palestinians from their properties further compounds the suffering of the people, and the collective punishment meted out through the blockade of Gaza, now in its ninth year, continues to wreak havoc on the lives of the residents of the enclave. It also seriously impedes the ability of the UN and other humanitarian agencies to deliver much-needed support to embattled communities as they try to rebuild shattered lives after the devastation caused by the Israeli aggression of 2014.

Mr. President, through all this the UN has remained seized of the Palestinian question. Countless UN resolutions testify to the political and diplomatic capital spent by the international community on this cause. And yet, none of this has been able to transform the grim reality of daily existence for the Palestinian people. Through its Resolution 2535B of 10th December 1969, the UN General Assembly expressed grave concern at the denial of basic rights to the Palestinians through collective punishment, arbitrary detention, curfews, destruction of homes and property, deportation, and other repressive acts. Half a century later, sadly, the resolution that we will adopt tomorrow will speak to the same trials and the same tribulations. This lack of progress is not an indictment of the commitment of the many, including my country, that have steadfastly supported the Palestinian cause, but of the few who have the capacity to bring about material change but lack the will to do so.

Renewed demands for recognition of the State of Palestine are a clarion call that must be heeded. Inaction by the Security Council has not only undermined its own credibility but also weakened the ideals that the organization espouses: the ideals of human dignity, of peaceful co-existence based on sovereign equality of all nations, and of the right to self-determination of all peoples. Resumption of negotiations is the only way forward. The Security Council should live up to its obligation and responsibility and summon the political courage and vision to adopt a resolution with parameters and time lines to end occupation. Talks, however, should be meaningful and result-oriented and not a means to provide space to Israel to further shrink prospects of a contiguous State of Palestine.

Mr. President, another dimension of conflict in the Middle East is the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. Israeli settlement policy and illegal practices of controlling resources and changing the demographic composition and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan is a blatant disregard and violation of UN resolutions. Lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East would need bold decisions. Withdrawal of occupation forces from all Arab lands, including from Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights is not only vital for the future of the next generation of Palestinians but for international peace and international security.

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

I thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan for her statement. I now invite the Distinguished Representative of Oman to deliver his statement. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

Oman: Your Excellency the President, august gathering, on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to thank you for convening this special meeting to consider the Palestinian Question of the situation in the Middle East. I would like also to thank His Excellency, the Permanent Representative of Senegal, the President of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and we commend the activities of the Committee.

Mr. President, the illegal practices by the Israeli forces in terms of expansion in settlements in West Bank and East Jerusalem and the violation of international laws and norms by expanding these settlements and building the separation wall is a flagrant violation of human rights of the Palestinian people who live in the occupied territories and it is violation of provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Hence, my country calls on the international committee, in particular the Security Council, to uphold its responsibility and compel Israel, the occupying power, to stop its practices and policies and its attempts to alter the demographic nature of the Palestinian land, and call on Israel to go back and resume negotiations to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories and to build the State of Palestine as East Jerusalem as its capital according to relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative and to withdraw from the Syrian Golan and other areas under the occupation of Israel in South Lebanon.

Mr. President, my country stresses that achieving peace and stability can be done only with a dialogue and negotiations and this was covered and stated in the statement of my country before the Seventy-first session. We called, and I quote: “We call to have serious negotiations that would maintain the right of all parties to live within secure borders on the basis of two states, Israel and Palestine, and we call on the international community to support all efforts aiming to achieve this noble goal of all love, peace in countries.” And I conclude here.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Ambassador of Oman for his statement, and now I invite the distinguished representative of Ecuador to deliver their statement. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

Ecuador: Mr. President, Fidel Castro, the eternal leader of the Cuban people, of the Latin American people, of the peoples, which throughout the world were seeking development, Fidel Castro who has just entered the pantheon of immortality, he said – he uttered a great truth here in this same hall in 1979, and I quote: “Palestine is the crux of the Middle East problem.” Indeed, if the international community had complied with the General Assembly Resolution of the 29th of November 1947, which created the State of Israel, it was intended to establish the independent State of Palestine as well, and if it had done justice to the Palestinian people, the world would not have had to decry the unspeakable tragedies that the Middle East region has experienced and is currently experiencing.

The Palestinian people, after 70 years of – after 70 years is still struggling to have the right to self-determination, to exist as a nation, and to establish a state like all the other peoples of the earth. These are rights which fall to the Palestinians, not only because of the recognition of this international community through Resolution 3236 (XXIX) adopted in 1974, but also because of the age-old history that has preceded this Palestinian people descended from Canaanites and Philistines more than 5,000 years ago.

On the occasion of the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is a priority, again, to remember that after the 1948 war between the brand new State of Israel and the neighboring Arab states, more than half of the native Palestinians were obliged to flee or were expelled from their land. In 1949, there were already more than 726,000 Palestinian refugees. After the 1967 war, the Palestinian exodus grew with 500,000 additional refugees. Seventy years later the increase in the displaced Palestinians is tragic and inhuman. 5.3 million Palestinian refugees, basically in the Near East, which represent more than 40% of the long-term refugees in the world, a percentage which clearly shows the ongoing violation of the rights where a people is living and their situation is increasingly deteriorating, being deprived even of their right to humanitarian assistance.

This organization has heard reliable testimonies from United Nations agencies concerning the difficulties they have in providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees and the obstruction by the government of Israel, vis-à-vis the humanitarian assistance agencies on the ground. The same charges have been received by the Security Council with regard to other governments, which are also obstructing the work provided for in many, numerous, many resolutions of the Security Council to provide humanitarians assistance in Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, and Yemen.

Mr. President, my delegation would like, again, to reiterate its view that the lack of effective action on the part of the Security Council, the indifference of the powers that are directly involved, the intransigence of extremist sectors in the State of Israel encouraged by outside support, this has created unilateral policies which, as in the case of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, are, and I quote: “suffering their people, drowning their economy, and preventing reconstruction.”

While in the occupied Palestinian territory, there is new legislation which contains discriminatory and anti-democratic provisions, which will seriously undermine the human rights of the Palestinian citizens living in Israel and the Palestinians that have been living in occupied Palestinian territory since 1967. Laws and bills, which seek, among other things, to strip and include from the Arab citizens their land, to control their citizenship, to undermine the capacity of Arab Israelis to – and their parliamentary representative to participate in the political life of the country, to penalize political expression or acts that call into question the nature, or the Jewish nature, a Zionist of the state, to give privileges to the Jewish citizens in the appropriation of state resources. According to the recent report of UNCTAD, submitted to the Special Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the occupation is causing a high cost in the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory. The Security Council cannot continue to avoid its responsibility or ignore the support of most of the states in this organization the support of the Palestinian cause. The Security Council must fulfill its responsibility and stop remaining silent and paralyzed in this connection.

There is a grave historic responsibility, particularly for some of the Permanent Members of the Security Council. Is necessary that there be a categoric response rejecting the policy of expanding settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories that endangers the two-state solution, established by the Quartet in its report of July 2016 as the only path to achieve lasting peace that envisages the security requirements of Israel and the Palestinian aspirations to sovereignty and independence and to put an end to the occupation which was begun in 1967.

Mr. President, once again, we urge Israel, a member state of this international community which was born because of a decision taken by the organization, we urge Israel to not scorn international law and the opinion of the international community, which year after year has called for an end to its policy of settlements and expansion. The Question of Palestine, as my delegation has indicated on other occasions, is primarily a political conflict, which requires political solutions. The fundamental root lies in the right of Palestinian people to self-determination and the solution depends on a resettlement for the Middle East problem, which has already been the scene of four wars, and, today more than ever, represents one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The bilateral formula in the search for peace, this is direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, it has been supported by the international community but has not, unfortunately, achieved any results, and no progress has been made. Seventy years waiting is enough. We believe that this path, unfortunately, has been exhausted. This is why our delegation values and wishes to express its support for the various initiatives that have emerged recently to promote the peace process between Israel and Palestine, including the French initiative and –France and Egypt, and the more recent proposal of Russia to host a meeting between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders in that country. This legally organized community has a duty and debt to return the rights – their rights to the Palestinian people and to bring about the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the United Nations as a full member as established in the partisan resolution in 1947.

My delegation wishes to reiterate, once again, and to firmly support the firm support of the government of people of Ecuador for the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state within the borders of 1967 – with East Jerusalem as its capital. 2017 should be – this is next year. This must be the year to end Israeli occupation of Palestine.

I will conclude with a new quotation of Fidel Castro, a different one. These words were uttered here in this General Assembly hall right from this rostrum in 1979 speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. And I quote: “We repudiate with all our force the merciless persecution and the genocide that was unleashed by Nazism against the Jewish people, but I cannot think of anything more similar in our contemporary history than the eviction, persecution, and genocide which, today, is being carried out by Imperialism and Zionism against the Palestinian people. Stripped of their land, expelled from their own homeland, dispersed throughout the world, persecuted and murdered, the heroic Palestinians constitute an impressive example of self-denial and patriotism. They are the living symbol of the greatest crime of our times.”

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Ambassador of Ecuador for his statement. I now invite the Distinguished Representative of Lau PDR to deliver their statement. You have the floor, sir.

Lao PDR: Mr. President, as of today, the Question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nation for more than six decades, but it is unfortunate that the Palestinian people still have no glimmer of hope to realize their right to self-determination, that relate to establishment of the independent State of Palestine. It is, therefore, time for the international community to take bold steps to create favorable conditions for the return to the dialogues and negotiation by all parties concerned in order to resolve this protracted conflict and realized the two-state solution so that Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace.

Mr. President, we are concerned over the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip following the war in 2014. At the current rate, efforts to address humanitarian needs and rebuild homes to improve livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinian people affected by the war were insufficient due to the blockade and severe import restriction as well as the unfulfilled donor pledge. Therefore, my delegation calls for the lifting of the blockades and urges the international community to provide support and assistance to Palestine so that the humanitarian assistance and reconstruction process can be expedited.

In addition, the continued illegal settlement activities and destruction of properties, homes, and economic institution in the occupied territories led to the further deterioration of the already burdened socioeconomic situation that the Palestinian people are facing. This constitutes a breach of the international law, including the international humanitarian law and human rights law and acts as the impediment to the peace process and opportunities for negotiation.

Therefore, these acts should be ceased to create conducive environment for the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table to find a just and lasting solution to this long-overdue Question of Palestine on the basis of the UN resolution and Quartet Roadmap which envisions a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the State of Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders.

Mr. President, Lao PDR has long recognized the State of Palestine and wishes to reaffirm its consistent support to the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful, and prosperous State of Palestine. So that it is a full-fledged members of the United Nation. We welcome the decisions by countries that have recognized the State of Palestine and hope that more countries will do so in the future. We believe that the more recognition of State of Palestine, the more positive contribution will be to expedite the peaceful solution to this long-overdue issues.

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

Thank you, Mr. President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Lau PDR for his statement. I now invite the Distinguished Representative of the United Arab Emirates to deliver their statement. You have the floor, sir.

United Arab Emirates: Mr. President, at the outset my delegation would like to extend our sincere condolences to the people and government of Cuba for the passing of the former president, His Excellency, Mr. Fidel Castro.

Mr. President, at the outset I would like to thank you and I seize this opportunity to reiterate the words of His Highness, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE in his letter addressed to the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. In his letter, His Highness stressed the support of the UAE to the people and government of Palestine in order to achieve their legitimate aspirations to establish a sovereign and independent state similarly to other peoples of the world.

Mr. President, the UAE expresses its concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian and security and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The escalation of violence and the absence of a solution that would grant Palestinians their inalienable rights, despite all the resolutions and efforts by the United Nations, its agencies, as well as other regional and international bodies to solve the Palestinian Question, the tragedy of the Palestinian peoples has continued for 70 years.

The UAE believes that this international inaction will continue as long as Israel continues with its illegitimate and illegal practices and its aggressive policies to oppress the Palestinian people. Israel continues to destroy and demolish Palestinian properties, to confiscate Palestinian lands, and to forcibly displace Palestinians while using excessive force against children and women.

In Gaza, Israel continues its inhumane embargo and blockade, which has led to a deteriorating humanitarian situation into a rising unemployment. Israel persists and its settlement expansion, which is considered illegal and prohibited according to international humanitarian law, thus disregarding all international calls for ceasing these activities. These activities undermine the two-state solution and constitute an obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East.

Given the situation, settlers continue to practice violence against the Palestinian people while Israel persists in its exploitation of the natural resources in occupied Arab territories, including in the Syrian Golan. Israel continues to take illegal measures to change the identity of Jerusalem. It persists in its attacks – systematic attacks against Al-Aqsa Mosque and against Islamic and Christian holy sites, which are in controversion of international conventions.

Mr. President, the UAE strongly condemns all Israeli violations and oppressive activities, which run counter to the international human rights and humanitarian laws and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We call on Israel to cease these violations and to demonstrate a genuine political will towards achieving a genuine peace in the region. We warn against the continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories, which threatens the stability and security of the region and plays into the hands of terrorists and extremist groups.

It is high time for the international community to assume it's legal, political, and material responsibilities to compel Israel to cease immediately all its illegal practices. We call on the international community, the Quartet, and the Security Council to act decisively and immediately according to the Charter and the provisions of international law to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, and to take all necessary measures to salvage the two-state solution and to end the Israeli occupation of all Arab territories including the occupied Syrian Golan.

We stress the need for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the borders of June 4, 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital according to international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, and The Madrid Principles.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the United Arab Emirates for his statement. I now invite the Distinguished Representative of Iraq to deliver their statement. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

Republic of Iraq: Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset, my delegation would like to express our sincere condolences to the people and government of Cuba for the passing of former President, His Excellency, Fidel Castro.

Mr. President, I would like to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of Iraq, addressed to the Palestinian people on this occasion. And I quote, "In the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People reflects and renews the international and permanent responsibility of the international community towards the Palestinian question and its commitment to granting the Palestinian people its legitimate rights in its just struggle towards self-determination. It also reflects the need to end the unjust Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories so that Palestinians can establish their own independent state similarly to other peoples of the world.”

The Republic of Iraq has long supported the Question of Palestine and their struggle to achieve their legitimate rights. We are extremely concerned by the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people, given the continued disregard by Israel of international resolutions and its continued aggressive attacks on the Gaza Strip, in particular, resulting in disastrous consequences and in the death and injury of hundreds of civilians including women, children, and the elderly. These attacks have also destroyed the infrastructure and schools and holy places, including UNRWA schools.

Israel also continues its expansionist policy by building settlements at the heart of Palestinian cities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. These practices have perpetuated the suffering of the Palestinian people, which has lost every hope to establish a comprehensive and just peace given the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967, despite the passing of 24 years since the first negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

On this International Day, the Republic of Iraq stresses that the comprehensive and just solution of the Palestinian Question is only possible through the establishment of the independent State of Palestine, a fully-fledged state along the lines of June 4, 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital according to the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-state solutions, and international resolutions including relevant United Nations resolutions. We call on those countries that are yet to recognize the State of Palestine, including European countries, we call on them to recognize the State of Palestine, including European countries, we call on them to recognize the State of Palestine similarly to the Kingdom of Sweden. We call on them to support the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate rights, given that such recognition would contribute to peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

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

Thank you, Mr. President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Ambassador of Iraq for his statement. Now I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Egypt to deliver their statement. You have the floor, sir.

Egypt: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, the Israeli occupation of Palestine is now into its fiftieth year and since occupation by its definition is a temporary procedure; however, this occupation is moving steadily towards a semipermanent status that fuels the continuation of a conflict that is the oldest and most dangerous in the Middle East. It erodes prospects of coexistence and mutual respect, and it turns – as described by the Secretary-General of the United Nations – as a fertile ground for hatred and extremism.

Mr. President, the international community has always been calling for the settlement of the Palestinian cause in a manner consistent with the legitimate rights of Palestinians to their self-determination and with the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples equally to live in peace in two states – two independent states side by side and on the basis of international resolutions within the borders of June 4, 1967.

However, today, 23 years after Oslo Accord, instead of witnessing a sovereign Palestinian state according to resolutions of international legitimacy, we witness the establishment of a quasi state of illegal settlements – a quasi state inhabited by at least more than half-million settlers expanded over the Palestinian territories by official support from the occupying power, this occupying power that has spared no effort over 10 years to confiscate lands, demolish homes, and displace Palestinians, supported by inaction of the international community and passive stances by international influential powers that can stop this illegal action.

Mr. President, maintaining the status quo is a retraction from the cause of this organization. It encourages further deterioration on the ground, the consequences of which are hard to predict. Let me stress here that it is a false conception that what we are doing here in this organization is a foregone conclusion. Our meetings in the Security – in the General Assembly over years on this item and the resolutions we have adopted is the only forum to document the rights and duties within the United Nations, which should remain and irrespective of any political balances, they will remain the legal guardian of the right of Palestinians to their independent state within the borders of June 1967 as Jerusalem as its capital. Our meetings in the General Assembly and our adoption of such resolutions is the testimony that the Arabs and Palestinians choose the path to peace. Therefore, allow me to thank all those who continue supporting the international legitimacy by voting in favor of these resolutions and address a word of acclaim to all those who vote against it, and allow me to ask them a question. If you are against the principle of maintaining the rights through the United Nations international resolutions, what is the best way to maintain these rights and restoring them and protecting them from erosion imposed by the status quo policy. The delay in settling the Palestinian cause as a result of the lack of will from major international powers should not make us forget the central role of the United Nations and its bodies or derail from the path charted by international legitimacy and terms of references.

Mr. President, Members of the Security Council heard in an Arria meeting formula on 14th of July, two statements from people from all over the world – from the United States, Belgium, and Israel itself – and it has been stressed again in this meeting that the Israeli settlement is not just an obstacle before peace and the two-state solution. However, it is the current crux of the crisis – the core and crux of the crisis. The Palestinian cause is mainly because of land that has been forcibly occupied. It is the cause of a people that has been stripped of its right to live in dignity. It was highlighted in decision as well something that we have to recognize and highly value. It is the Israeli voices calling for peace, the voices that are aware that the occupation is impossible to continue and to coexistence within the attempts to impose a status quo is also impossible. It is impossible to achieve the goal within the discriminatory application of laws. These are the voices against the imposition of the status quo policy or drop the two-state solution. They are the voices that are aware that one people cannot live at the expense of another people. Hence, I am fully confident that the call for peace by Israelis within the United Nations expresses the desire of a great segment of the Israeli people – if not the biggest at large – and we as Egyptians and Arabs are resolved to cooperate with this segment to continue our peace towards comprehensive and just peace in the region.

Mr. President, Egypt would remain committed to the Arab Peace Initiative and to encouraging international efforts by international parties to resume negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, in particular the efforts by France and Russia. Egypt is resolved to act bilaterally within multilateral framework to enforce its vision for peace in the region. This vision has been introduced 37 years ago by the conclusion of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and it is still implementable if it garnered the international necessary will and if Israel maintained and opted for just and comprehensive peace for itself and other the countries of the region.

Chair: I now invite the Distinguished Representative of Saudi Arabia to give you their statement. Madam, you have the floor.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Mr. President, I would like on this occasion to thank you on behalf of the Delegation of Saudi Arabia for making it possible for us to take part in this discussion in the general debate on the Palestinian cause. We will always support the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in order to enable it to regain its inalienable rights. In this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we would like to recall the tragedy of this people and its sufferings which have lasted in spite of the fact that the Palestinian cause is the crux of the Middle East conflict and there have been many initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative which was launched by my country 15 years ago. The Palestinian people are still deprived of its right to live in dignity and to obtain its freedom and its right to self-determination.

Israel still continues its violations of international law and its illegal policy, especially activities of settlements and violation of the sacredness of holy places – the sanctity of holy places – and it is putting up obstacles against peace efforts, and the international community in this context should dissuade Israel from carrying out these practices which flout international law and which are hindering the efforts designed to succeed in negotiations. My country is dedicated to a lasting peace. The peace processes and its success depends on the complete and final withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories, the right of the Palestinian people to have its self-determination create an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. We should put an end to the tragedy endured by the Palestinian people and my country supports the efforts made by the Palestinian entity, headed by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, and the efforts internationally to provide the support necessary for the Palestinian people with Jerusalem as its capital, but especially to preserve the identity – the Islamic and Arab identity of East Jerusalem.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your attention, sir.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Saudi Arabia. I now give the floor to the Representative of Qatar. You have the floor, sir.

Qatar: Thank you, Madam President. In the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful. Madam President, I would like to thank you for convening this session and I thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his statement and for the efforts of the Committee. We seize this opportunity to appreciate the efforts of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the DPI.

Madam President, the Middle East is facing a number of great challenges given the growing crises and conflicts in the region which negatively affect the people of the region, undermining their enjoyment of their basic rights, their well-being, and their development, with disastrous effects across the world. Therefore, stability and peace must be achieved in this region by addressing the root causes of these crises, including the failure to counter the grave violations of international law, international resolutions, and the failure to ensure equity and justice. The region attaches the highest importance to achieving a just and comprehensive peace by ending the Israeli occupation of their territories. The seven decades of occupation have proven that by imposing a fait accompli, there can be no peace or stability in the region.

Therefore, we commend the initiative taken by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to proclaim 2017 as the international year of ending the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. This initiative is based on realistic and legal justifications that would diffuse the tension between the two parties. We will renew our condemnation of all Israeli practices, the occupying power, against holy sites, Islamic and Christian, in Jerusalem as well as attempts to alter the situation of al-Aqsa Mosque and to impose restrictions on Muslims entering the mosque. We welcome the decision by the Executive Council of UNESCO last October on Palestine and the decision by the International Heritage Committee which proves that al-Haram al-Sharif is an Islamic heritage, and Israel is compelled to protect its historical value.

Madam President, the resolutions of the General Assembly in this regard reflect the commitment by the international community to compel Israel, the occupying power, to cease its unilateral activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem, which seek to change the demographic situation of the city. All these resolutions stress the illegality of Israeli practices to impose its laws and legislation on East Jerusalem. These resolutions also prove the invalidity of the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and calls on Israel to withdraw fully to the lines of June 4, 1967.

Madam President, it is time to reach a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution based on UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, based on the two-state solutions. Such a solution would create two states, Israel and Palestinian, living side by side in peace and within recognized and secure borders along the lines of 1967. Therefore, there is a need for Israel to withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory, occupied in 1967, while ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people including their right to self-determination and to establish their own independent state while reaching a just solution to the refugee crisis, according to General Assembly Resolution 194 (D3). There is a need to resume negotiations according to relevant terms of reference and based on a clear timetable towards a just, comprehensive, and lasting solution.

Madam President, the escalating violence on the ground is the result of the continued illegal practices and occupation and the excessive use of force and violence against Palestinians as well as the crimes committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians with full impunity. Therefore, we cannot be surprised that the Palestinians are protesting against all these measures that deny them their rights and diminish any prospect of establishing their own independent state. Therefore, the international community must provide an international protection for the Palestinian people while implementing and enforcing Security Council resolutions, especially Resolutions 904 of 1994 and 605 of 1987, regarding the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Palestinian territory.

Madam President, the continued unjust blockade on the Gaza Strip and which denies the people of Gaza their basic necessities as well as the restrictions imposed on the entry of goods and services through the Strip result in disastrous humanitarian effects and impedes the peace process. Qatar is aware of the need to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, we will continue our humanitarian efforts and we will continue to assist in the reconstruction of the Strip. In this regard, Qatar has recently inaugurated the schools of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Khalifa Al Thani in the Gaza Strip and will continue our efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation.

Madam President, the international community is currently focused on achieving the SDGs, however, the policies imposed by the occupying power impedes the ability of the Palestinian people to achieve the SDGs. The Palestinian economy is suffering as a result of the Israeli occupation according to an UNCTAD report. Therefore, there should be a comprehensive lasting and evidence-based mechanism within the UN system to determine the amount of these economic losses.

Madam President, in closing, the State of Qatar renews its full support to the Palestinian people and to all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting, comprehensive, and just peace in the Middle East.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Qatar. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of China.

China: Distinguished Madam Chair, the Question of Palestine is a core Middle East situation. It is a question of fundamental importance to peace of the region. The international community should have a greater sense of urgency to solve the Palestinian Question. Concrete efforts should be made to promote a just and full solution to this question. This is in the interest of the peoples in the Middle East, including Palestinians, and can help promote peace and stability of the world.

Madam Chair, the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks are at an impasse while violent conflicts continue. Humanitarian situations are dire. The international community should not just let the Palestinian people suffer, nor should it allow the Middle East peace process to stall. Concerted efforts should be made to solve the Palestinian-Israeli Question. China calls upon the international community to make efforts in the following aspects.

First, it should adhere to the right direction of an independent Palestinian state and peaceful coexistence of the Palestinian and Israeli states on the basis of the land for peace, bring support to a two-state solution and Arab Peace Initiative and relevant UN resolutions. The international community should promote the early resumption of the peace talks for real outcomes.

Second, the international community should urge Palestine and Israel to exercise restraint and put an end to violent conflicts. Israel should demonstrate its sincerity first by ceasing settlement building and demolishing Palestinian houses so as to create conditions for the resumption of the peace talks. In the mean time, attention should be given to legitimate concerns, security concerns of the regional countries.

Thirdly, the international community should provide a guarantee for the Middle East peace process. It should explore a larger scope for peace promoting efforts and develop more effective peace-promoting mechanisms for the Middle East issues. The General Assembly should urge relevant Member States to concretely implement General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian-Israeli Question. The Security Council should quickly take action and actively respond to the legitimate concerns of Palestine and Arab states.

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

China is a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people. At the commemorative conference on The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People yesterday, President Xi Jinping sent his message to extend China’s sympathy and support to the Palestinian people. President Xi emphasizes that China supports the building of an independent Palestinian state with full sovereignty on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a greater participation in international affairs by Palestine in a capacity of a state. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China is ready to work with the international community for the early realization of the comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Madam Chair, at present, Middle East is still experiencing wars and conflicts, beset by the intertwined hot spot issues and spreading terrorism. The international community should work together for the peace and stability of the region, which is in the interest of all parties. First, the international community should respect the rights of the countries and peoples in a region to choose their own political systems and the development pathways and encourage parties to resolve differences through inclusive political dialogues.

Second, the international community should uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. When dealing with Middle Eastern affairs, it should respect independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and observe widely recognized basic principles in international relations.

Thirdly, the international community should help the Middle Eastern region improve people’s well-being, cultivate a culture of tolerance, strive for harmonious coexistence, and address root causes of the regional turmoil.

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

Madam Chair, together with the international community, China is ready to make its contribution to find a way out of the difficult situations in the Middle East, thus enabling the early realization of peace and development of the region.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of China. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Morocco. You have the floor, sir.

Kingdom of Morocco: Madam President, first of all, I wish to express appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, His Excellency Ambassador Fodé Seck for the efforts made to support the rights of the Palestinian people.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Committee, contained in document A/71/35 for the period between October 2015 and October 2016, which relates the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, which are a cause of concern. While the report has considered and has also specified initiatives to relaunch the peace process – these are initiatives that we fully support – in order to dispel the impasse which is blocking the Palestinian cause and would help the Palestinian people to live in dignity and create an independent state within the 1967 borders, side by side with Israel in peace and security, my delegation has also taken note of the report of the Secretary-General in A/51 – the report of the Secretary-General.

And taking in The Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People has been an opportunity for the King of Morocco to recall – to reaffirm to the President of – the Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and through him, Mahmoud Abbas, the support of the Kingdom of Morocco, in particular, the right of the Palestinian people to create an independent state within the pre-1967 borders, side by side with Israel in complete security and peace in accordance with international law.

His Majesty has also specified the following, and I quote: “The obstacles that are impeding the creation of a Palestinian state, and accordingly, our state in these circumstances, the international and regional circumstances, it’s important to heighten the awareness with the international community with respect to its duty to the Palestinian people, its responsibility, given the suffering of the Palestinian people, which continually suffer, given the intransigence of the other party, which is continuing its settlements and its aggression in the holy places and is doing everything to undermine the two-state solution.”

Madam President, the Kingdom of Morocco, there the King chairs the al-Quds Commission. When there is violence and Israeli practices in Palestine in general and in Jerusalem particularly to impede the status of Jerusalem as set forth in the resolutions under international law as an integral part to Jerusalem, an integral part of the Palestine – Palestinian occupied territory since 1967, an attempt to drown the Palestinian cause within the religious conflict and also directed towards integrating Jerusalem in space and in time. These are recurrent acts of aggression, the systematic aggression perpetrated on the area in front of mosques.

This – we wish to express our commitment to support peace and security, equity and stability in Palestine. It will spare no effort to preserve the rights of the Palestinians in that city and to ensure the legal status of this area, and we will do everything possible in every possible means and every necessary means so that the al-Quds al-Sharif, that to succeed in making economic progress to strengthen the resilience of the Palestinians and enables them live in dignity and to preserve the heritage of this city which is a perfect symbol of coexistence and tolerance.

Madam President, the only way to solve the question of the Palestinian cause is to return to the negotiating table in good faith and to define a deadline for having a two-state solution living side to side in peace and security.

The position of Morocco remains firm. It's a position which is based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the principles of peace, namely the creation of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital within the 1967 borders. Now more than ever to move the lines in the peace process given a clear principles of international law, the Kingdom of Morocco will spare no effort to participate in every initiative directed towards ensuring the success of the peace process and to achieve a peace settlement that will guarantee security and stability in the region.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Morocco. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Bangladesh. You have the floor, sir.

Bangladesh: Madam President, Bangladesh joined the international community in reaffirming its commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence. Bangladesh supports the cause of an independent, viable, and united Palestinian state on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian peoples, our honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked all concerned parties, and I quote: "To take a pragmatic approach and work with them for attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

We appreciated the Secretary-General report reflecting his abiding commitment to resuming negotiations on the Palestinian Question. We believe the new Secretary will also remain seized with these issues towards restoring the political horizon for the negotiation to take off. We remain mindful of the Quartet efforts to assert the solution of the grounds for moving ahead with the peace process.

The year 2017 will mark the 50th anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. This should be an occasion for mobilizing the necessary political; we'll be all concerned for mindful peace initiatives. The immediate priority of the international community would be to send out a clear message for putting an end to Israel settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories. The illegal Israeli settlements have been rightly identified as the main obstacle to a two-state solution. The Israeli block to the Gaza Strip is about to enter tenth year. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation, they remain an urgent matter of concern. We call upon the international community to impress upon Israel, the occupying power, to halt its systematic violation of international, humanitarian law, and human rights principles.

We repeat that implementation of the relevant UN resolution, the Quartet Roadmap, the Arab Peace Plan, and the Principles of Law for Peace remain critical for achieving a durable solution of the Palestinian Question. Bangladesh supports the Palestinian delegates and interest in playing an enhanced role in the UN. We shall continue to support the work of the relevant UN entities and Committee in promoting and practice protecting the rights of the Palestinian peoples.

I thank you. Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Bangladesh. I now give this floor to the Distinguished Representative of Norway. You have the floor, Madam.

Norway: Thank you, Madam President. In the efforts to resolve the conflict by establishing two states living side by side in peace and security remain in an impasse. We must strive to safeguard two decades of investments in building the foundations for the two-state solution. The parties need to increase their efforts to make this a reality. We know what steps are required. All unilateral actions that undermine the political process and turns hope into confrontation must stop. Expansion and legalization of settlements must stop. Violence and incitement to violence must stop.

Madam President, Norway asks the Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, AHLC, the donor group for Palestine, see some positive signs. The AHLC meeting in New York on 19th September was the most constructive meeting in years. The Palestinian authority and Israel had reached an agreement on the electricity sector and important progress has been made this year on fiscal issues. The two parties agreed on key infrastructure projects in Gaza. This way forward also warrants full cooperation from the donors. The Palestinian authority will not be able to close the current financial gap by itself, and continued budget support is needed also to enable reform.

Norway is actively working with the parties and the donors to follow up on the results from September. When the AHLC meets again in Brussels in the spring, we must make sure that the Electricity Debt Agreement has reached its implementation phase and that the parties have made serious progress on water and energy.

The Palestinian Authority needs to reform and strengthen its political institutions and governance structures. The West Bank and Gaza needs to be reintegrated into one authority that fully respects the parameters of the security arrangement agreements between Israel and the PLO. The situation in Gaza is of great concern. Developing Gaza in an effective manner must remain a top priority. The reconstruction must be accelerated. The volume of imported construction material, including cement, through the Gaza reconstruction mechanism needs to be increased. The entry of construction materials through other channels is undermining the effort to address dual use and security problems in Gaza.

Madam President, the mandate and purpose of the AHLC is to underpin such efforts to realize the two-state solution. While progress on the economic fight is no substitute for political solution, the parties must continue their cooperation to advance the Palestinian institutions and economy in preparation for independence.

Thank you very much.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Norway. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Turkey. You have the floor, sir.

Turkey: Madam President, I would like to start by extending our heartfelt condolences to the people and government of Cuba for the passing of President Fidel Castro, who was a legendary leader. Let me emphasize at the outset Turkey's strong and long-standing commitment to the establishment of a peaceful, stable, and democratic environment respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Middle East. It's unfortunate that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the core challenge to attain this goal. As the Secretary-General has said, we should reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people and working to build a future of peace, justice, security, and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

Madam President, the historic injustice, continuing occupation, and Israel's practices in contravention of international law, particularly the systematic expansion of settlements, erode the viability of a two-state solution. House demolitions, land confiscation, administrative detentions, denying the Palestinians fundamental rights as well as attempts to undermine the status and sanctity of al Haram al-Sharif reap desperation and anger among the Palestinians. They're being collectively punished for decades. All of these combined weaken the possibility of a peaceful coexistence. They feel hatred, alienation, and extremism in the region. In order to overcome the current impasse, the Palestinian people should be able to sit at the negotiating table as the State of Palestine with equal standing with Israel.

In this regard, recognition of the State of Palestine by more countries and its full integration into international institutions is vital. To reach a just and lasting peace, it is also crucial for the Palestinians to voice their legitimate demands in unity. In this regard, Turkey keeps encouraging the Palestine groups for reconciliation and national unity. In addition, empowering the Palestinian people and improving their living conditions through development and investments is more urgent than ever. Turkey will continue its assistance programs, in particular the ones to address the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, and the development needs of the West Bank.

Madam President, we all agree that prospects for lasting peace are fading away. In this regard, revitalization of the peace process is essential to grant the life and dignity to the Palestinian people as well as to achieve stability in the region. With the Israeli occupation approaching its fiftieth year, the international community should uphold its responsibility and renew its engagement to reach a negotiated political settlement based on two-state solution in accordance with international law relevant to UN resolutions and Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey will not cease its efforts towards a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue with the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Turkey. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan, you have the floor, sir.

Kazakhstan: I thank you. Madam President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the Middle East region and consistently strives for political solution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. We’re seriously concerned by the absence of real progress for this conflict which impacts regional and international security. In his latest report on assistance to the Palestinian people, the Secretary-General pointed out that the negative trends on the ground, which according to him made the two-state solution more distant. Kazakhstan concerned, in particular, about the gravity of the Palestinian situation and calls for urgent action by the international community towards its resolution to mitigate the suffering of Palestinians in all aspects of their existence.

The blockades and checkpoints in Gaza with little scope for economic survival are worsening the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population, deteriorate relations and diminish prospective for peace. The settlement process and its rapid expansion in the occupied territories not only aggravates the conflict but also militates against all peace processes as it has denied the Palestinian people of large territories of their land. The wall of separation is an issue of contention between the two-state sites. We see the two-state solution with return to the 1967 borders as the only viable option for durable peace to be reached by dialogue, in keeping with the UN Charter and relevant Security Council resolutions. Other mechanisms and initiatives of the bilateral and multilateral levels, such as the Roadmap for Peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, should be available.

My delegation urge the Middle East Quartet to pursue its mitigation efforts and calls on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate political responsibility towards the long cherished peace. We reiterate Kazakhstan’s commitment to join the multilateral effort to ensure peace and stability in Palestine.

I thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Kazakhstan. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Libya. Libya, you have the floor.

Libya: In the name of God, the Compassionate and the Merciful, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item, and I would also like to thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the reported document A/71/359.

Madam President, in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation, we have to end the occupation in the Palestinian territories and in the occupied Golan and the international community has a responsibility to force the – the Israeli occupation authorities to comply with the United Nations resolutions and to respect the historic rights of the Palestinian people, especially the right to return, the right to self-determination, and the right to create a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Israeli occupation authorities have now have the habit of flouting obligations, and this under international law.

We have no need here to go into a list of all the practices of Israel already documented in the United Nations and in civil society organizations and in the media. But we would like to recall the war crimes committed against humanitarian Gaza and in Jerusalem, the frequent use and excessive use of force against women and children and the system of isolation and the settlement activities, the crimes committed against Palestinians in the separation war and the assassinations and expulsions and expropriations of land and destruction of houses and the violation of holy places. All of these are violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law.

The oppression of the Palestinian people and the policy of an annexation and Judaization are the objective of removing the Arab identity from Jerusalem and are carried out, in practice, systematically in a recurring manner and the occupation authorities are continuing their violation of legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and are flouting the international resolutions, especially resolutions adopted by the Security Council. In this context, we applaud the international community’s efforts to take every step necessary to help the Palestinian people and put an end to the settlement activities, which are changing the situation in the field and to put an end to Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories and to recognize the Palestinian state as a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

Madam President, the occupation authorities are imposing a siege against the Gaza Strip ever since 2007. This is a form of punishment, collective punishment, which threatens the life of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and is violating international humanitarian law. It is a siege, which it has a negative impact on the daily lives of the inhabitants of the Gaza and it results in a deterioration and a lack of infrastructure and of medication and equipment for medical facilities. And also, those who suffer from hardship and electricity shortages.

The inhabitants of Gaza are suffering from the increase of unemployment and a lack of drinking water. Without forgetting the military aggressions, which have caused hardship and hundreds of thousands of death and wounded among the Palestinians, including women and children and the elderly, without forgetting the policy of expansion, which has not spared schools, especially the UNRWA schools, which has had the result of displacing thousands of people.

Madam President, my country condemns the Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan and the practices carried out by the occupation forces. These are practices which are perpetrated against Syrian civilians in the Golan and settlement activities in an attempt to impose Israeli identity on the Arab habitants of the Golan. And this in violation of humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention, and we think that the necessary steps should be taken so that Israel would cease its activities and comply with resolution of 1981.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Libya. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Algeria. You have the floor, sir.

Algeria: Thank you, Madam President. To begin with, I would like to thank members of the Committee on the Exercise Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the comprehensive report. We welcome the important recommendations contained in the report. We would like to also thank the Secretary-General for his reports on that matter.

Madam President, the General Assembly is meeting today to discuss the Palestinian Question when prospects of a political solution is fading away, a solution that recognizes the full rights of the Palestine people on its land occupied since June 1967 and establish its independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. We have to stress here that the inaction of international community to – and its inability to find justice solution is an utter failure of the contemporary world order.

Madam President, the international community has made repeated calls to end the occupation, including through the General Assembly and the League of Arab States. However, the Israel occupation continues on the Palestinian territories, and these policies includes the establishment of the apartheid while the displacement of Palestinian civilians, the imposition of collective punishment and the continuous Gaza blockade. The people there are suffering the impacts of the recent brutal aggression in complete violation of international law.

Madam President, given the lack of accountability of the brutal Israel occupation, it does not stop its daily violations of human rights of Palestinian people. This includes the expansion in settlements and trying to promote them to gain acceptance of them, violence by settlers, exploitation of natural resources in both the West Bank and Gaza, the miserable state of detainees and the prisoners in detention centers and administrative detentions and excessive use of power. The extrajudicial killing and the penalizing legislations which propose the deportation of Palestinian families and demolition of Palestinian houses and forcibly moving nomads and herders communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the blockade of Gaza and lack of its reconstruction.

We have to recall here that on this day of solidarity with the Palestinian people that the Palestinian people have the right to protection under the international law and Israel being the occupying power is obliged to allow the Palestinian people to exercise this right in full and the refusal by Israel to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the Palestinian territories is a flagrant defiance of the will of the international community. As Israel is acting unafraid of any punishment, the unjust Israeli practices and its continuous violations, on top of which is the policy of settlement and the Judaization of al-Quds al-Sharif have been and are still the main obstacle before the two-state solution as stated in the recent Quartet report.

Madam President, this occupation and the continued violations to the rights of Palestinian people are continuing, and this day serves as a reminder of the responsibility of the United Nations in the international community at large, vis-à-vis the Palestinian people living under the Palestinian occupation for more than half a century to provide this people the protection it deserves and bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its occupation. We come – my delegation welcomes the designation of 2017 as the international year to end the Israel occupation

In conclusion, Madam President, as Algeria reiterates its firm and principled position supporting the Palestinian people and its just cause and the calls on the international community and the United Nations to put an end to the flagrant violations of occupying power and to intensify efforts to enable the Palestinian people to establish its independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital on its occupied territories since 1967.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Algeria.

Colleagues, we have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. I should like to inform all of us members that the consideration of Draft Resolution A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20, and A/71/L.21 will take place following the conclusion of the debate on Agenda item 34. Colleagues, the General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of Agenda item 35.

General Assembly will now consider Agenda item 34 entitled, The Situation in the Middle East. Under this agenda – under this item, the Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East has been circulated in Documents A/71/328 and Addendum 1. And the Report of the Secretary-General on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine has been circulated in Document A/71/359. In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it two draft resolutions issued as Documents A/71/L.8 entitled, The Syrian Golan, and A/71/L.22 entitled, Jerusalem.

I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Egypt to introduce Draft Resolutions A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22.

Egypt: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the world is witnessing numerous humanitarian crisis, mainly in the Middle East, which has been plagued by instability for many reasons. However, we must not forget that this instability is due historically to long decades of injustice done to the Arab peoples under a seemingly indefinite occupation.

Any attempts to use the crisis of the region as a pretext to divert attention from the Israeli occupation of Arab territories are based on false claims that run counter to the most basic humanitarian principles and perpetuate illegal and inhumanitarian – inhuman situations. These situations will continue to deteriorate as long as the occupation continues, and as long as we continue to condone its practices and its violations against other peoples, which are supposed to enjoy the same rights as other peoples of the world, especially the right of freedom, self-determination, and to a homeland.

Madam President, in line with the international rejection of the Israeli occupation and practices, illegal practices in the occupied Arab territories, I have the honor to introduce today at the General Assembly on behalf of the cosponsors two draft resolutions under Item 34 entitled, The Situation in the Middle East. Draft resolution entitled, Jerusalem, in document A/71/L.22 stresses that the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council are the main references on this issue. It stresses that any measures taken by Israel, the occupying power, to impose its mandate and administration on the City of Jerusalem are illegal measures and, therefore, there are null and void.

The international community expresses its deep concern at the continued Israeli illegal settlement activities, including and according to plan E1, and the Israeli construction of the separation wall in and around East Jerusalem, thus separating the city from the remaining parts of occupied Palestinian territories. Therefore, given our attachment to peace, and in order to protect the religious character of Jerusalem, the draft resolution takes into consideration the legitimate concerns of Israelis and Palestinians by reaching assurances that guarantee freedom of religion to all people of the city, and allows all people regardless of their religions and their nationality access into the holy sites. The draft resolution also calls for respecting the historical status of the city in words and in deed, including in Al-Haram al-Sharif.

As for draft resolution entitled, The Syrian Golan, in document A/71/L.8, in this resolution, or draft resolution, we send an important message on behalf of the international community, namely that despite the unprecedented humanitarian crisis and conflict in Syria, the world must not forget that there is an important part of Syrian territories that continues to be under occupation. The draft reservation stresses that despite the passage of 35 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 497 of 1981, Israel has yet to comply with the provisions of this resolution. It also stresses the applicability of the two Hague Conventions of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on occupied Syrian territory since 1967, and reaffirms the illegal nature of the decision to impose Israeli laws on the Syrian Golan, and the illegal nature of the Israeli settlements. It calls on Israel to withdraw fully from the Syrian Golan to the lines of June 4, 1967.

Madam President, peoples of the region continue to suffer from war and aggression, and look forward achieving peace, stability, and coexistence. As General Assembly resolutions prove, such a goal will not be achieved without a true political will and a serious commitment on the part of Israel to withdraw fully from all occupied Arab and Palestinian territories in line with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, and with the principle of Land for Peace, and the norms of international resolutions.

In closing, on behalf of the cosponsors and on behalf of Egypt, I hope that all members of the General Assembly will support the two draft resolutions, and I urge you all to vote in favor of the draft resolutions to demonstrate the solid international will and its commitment to our international goals in order to uphold the noble principles and purposes of our Charter.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Egypt. Colleagues, we will now proceed to the debate, and I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. You have the floor, sir.

Syrian Arab Republic: Madam President, I wish you thank the delegation of the Republic of Egypt for the draft resolution entitled, The Syrian Golan and Jerusalem, the two draft resolutions. I also wish to express appreciation for the states that have voted in favor of the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan.

Madam President, the General Assembly every year considers the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East, and it has since its 52nd Session in 1972. The General Assembly at each session calls upon Israel to put an end to its occupation in the Arab territories, stressing that any measure taken by Israel, the occupying power, in the occupied Arab territories and to impose its laws and its authority on Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, these are measures which are unlawful, illegitimate, and null and void.

The resolutions of the General Assembly go hand in hand with the position expressed by the Security Council unanimously in the adoption of the resolutions on occupied Jerusalem and the resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan. These are two resolutions which have rejected the provocative unilateral decisions of the Israeli occupation authority to annex Jerusalem and the Syrian, occupied Syrian Golan, and to consider them as null and void without legal consequences. We today are debating once again this agenda item 50 years after the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in the middle of a very grave international alarm and the Israeli action in Palestine.

All of this goes – is parallel with an escalation of aggression and settlement activities by Israel. For example, in the framework of the adjustment law, which is – tries to give illegitimate character to the law preventing the prohibiting the call to prayer in Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan is part of this sad picture. Israel was always called upon to return the Syrian Golan to Syria and to respect the Resolution 497 of 1981. Israel persists in confiscating land in the occupied Syrian and continues its settlements activity and depleting the resources and distorting the historic reality, and to pillage the settlements and to implant mines.

The Syrians continue to pursue Syrian education programs and their right to have the – identify with their country, Israel, their right to build hospitals in their country without forgetting the terrorist policies, the repression, and arbitrary arrests, and the façade and the sentences.

May I recall here that Israel is continuing its warlike and racist policies against our brothers in the occupied Syrian Golan. We have seen that recently the Supreme Marshall Court has condemned to set years and one month the young prisoner Amal Abu Saleh, and 22 months of prison to Bashira Mahmoud because they objected – they tried to obstruct an ambulance which was going through the town of Beit Atsad al-Trumps in the occupied territory. These sentences show the complicity of Israel with the terrorist groups in Syria and the violation of the resolutions of the Security Council concerning combating the Daesh terrorists.

Once again, the Israeli forces halted a Syrian mandate after 27 years of imprisonment in the detention center in Israel because he lifted the veil with respect to Israel's cooperation with the al-Nusra terrorist group in the Separation Zone. And we call for pressure to be placed on Israel to cease this combat immediately. And Dr. Yadel Jarweh and the young Amal Abu Saleh, that they be released and the sentences be annulled with regard to the sentence of Bashira Mahmoud. The Syrian government has addressed the United Nations Secretary-General and the Security Council and other competent bodies to achieve that humane goal. It would appear that not everyone is as informed about the grave situation of our citizens in the occupied Golan.

Israel, the occupying power, since the beginning of these events, has had a new chapter with respect to its acts of aggression and violation with respect to the convention on the separation of forces and the resolutions of the Security Council, particularly in combating terrorism. We have recorded Israeli support for terrorist reports – armed terrorists in the separation zone. Daesh, which is on the black list of the Security Council, and their attacks – contacts between the two groups with regard to the cease-fire line, and to facilitate transit and movement in the south of the separation zone towards the north. Israel provides logistic support and medical support in a flagrant way and then it makes it possible for them to return to the Syrian territory to pursue their activities there. This has all been done with the knowledge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations which has not done anything.

Madam President, it’s no longer tolerable for the United Nations and Member States to cooperate with the occupying force in a routine matter and with full solidarity, particularly after the statement made by the head of the Israeli government on the 17th of April, 2016, at the provocative meeting held by the occupying force in the Syrian Golan. And I quote Israel: “Israel will never abandon the Solan and it will remain there forever.”

We have heard no comments, no condemnation, no rejection of this, and no reservations expressed from the Secretary-General, the Secretariat, or the Security Council to respond to these provocative declarations. But the children in the Syrian Golan respond on a daily basis to these declarations which clearly violate in a flagrant way international law and the resolutions of the United Nations, and are committed to their Syrian Arab nationality and are part of the Syrian citizenship which object to the Israeli practices. May I quote the Syrian Golan, as an integral part of the Arab Syrian Republic – Syrian Arab Republic – the nationality – the Syrian Arab nationality, is a eternal criterion for us which goes from father to son. Our land is sacred property for our Syrian children. We do not recognize any decision taken by Israel to annex us to the Israeli entity. We are refusing categorically the resolutions and decisions of the Israeli government directed towards usurping our Arab – Syrian Arab identity.

Madam President, the government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms today that the sovereign right of the Syrian-occupied Golan, in accordance with the 1967 lines, cannot be a subject for bargaining. We demand that to achieve peace there must be no concessions – no tragic discussions. These land has been usurped and violated. They must be returned to their legitimate owner. The Israeli settlers must leave our land in the Golan sooner or later. And in that context, the question which comes up here and which requires an answer is, how long will Israel remain and escape all accountability to pursue its warlike policies? The General Assembly must today undertake the necessary steps – to confine Israel to take the necessary steps to withdraw from the occupied territories back to 1967 lines and instead of usurping this area and to continue to fan the flames here. May I call upon states to support the resolution on the Syrian Golan and the resolution on Palestine.

Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, and I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait. You have the floor, madam.

Kuwait: In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. Madam President, may the peace, blessings, and mercy of God be upon you. At the outset, my delegation would like to express its support to the Secretary-General for his efforts aimed at strengthening international peace and security, and his close follow-up of the situation in the Middle East. We commend the Secretary-General’s report in Document A/71/328. We support all international efforts aimed at laying the foundations for security and stability in the region and will continue to take part in all efforts that seek to strengthen international peace and security.

Madam President, the faltering peace process in the Middle East continues to constitute a great challenge for the international community, reflecting its complete paralysis despite the pressure being brought on bearing to – being brought on Israel over six decades to cease its expansionist policies and its settlement activities, as well as its continued violations of human rights against the Palestinian people which continues to be targeted by systematic attacks and aggression that should not go uncontested.

My country would like to express its full support and solidarity with the Palestinian people to achieve its aspiration, namely to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital along the borders of June 4, 1967, according to the land-for-peace principle and the Arab Peace Initiative. My country calls once again on the international community to compel Israel to implement Security Council Resolution 497 which calls on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan. My country supports all measures carried out by the Republic of Lebanon to preserve its security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stress the need for Israel to cease its continued violations of the Lebanese sovereignty, to withdraw fully from all occupied territories, and to implement fully Security Council Resolution 1701.

Madam President, my delegation is deeply concerned given the continued Syrian crisis and the bloody conflict which enters its sixth year. We are concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation with the displacement of 13 million Syrians inside and outside Syria, and with the death of more than 300,000 people. The Syrian refugees constitute today the largest refugee community in the world. In this regard, we cannot ignore the situation in the city of Aleppo. Statistics demonstrate the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the city. 275,000 people are currently besieged in eastern Aleppo, constituting half of the population of besieged people in Syria. In fact, the number besieged of people in Syria has reached 582,000 people.

In this regard, we renew our condemnation of deliberate targeting of all residential areas and medical and civilian structures across Syria, including the indiscriminate bombardment with barrel bombs and internationally prohibited weapons. We stress the need to bring all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity to international justice.

The State of Kuwait renews its support to the efforts of the United Nations and international efforts to reach a political solution in Syria according to Resolution 2254, which sets a clear path for such a solution based on the First Geneva Conference statement or communiqué of 2012 and the two Geneva or Vienna statements, in order to create a transitional government with full executive powers to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to a life of freedom and dignity in a manner that would preserve the stability, sovereignty, independence, and unity of Syria. In this regard and in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, my country hosted three international donor conferences to support the humanitarian situation in Syria in 2013, 2014, and 2015. My country has pledged $1,300,000,000, which were largely disbursed to specialized UN agencies and other intergovernmental and nongovernmental international organizations in the humanitarian field. My country has also co-chaired the fourth conference on supporting the humanitarian situation in Syria, which was held in London at the beginning of this year.

Madam President, my country supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and of his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. These efforts which seek to reach a solution to the crisis in Yemen, to reach a comprehensive consensus that would restore security and stability in Yemen and end the bloodshed and the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people, based on the three terms of reference, namely the outcome of the national dialogue; the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism; as well as Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2216. We stress our rejection of any unilateral measures, including those announced by the Houthis and by the General Popular Conference to create a government of salvation. We note that the government of the Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi is the legitimate government recognized internationally. In this regard, my country reiterates its support to the security and stability of Yemen in a manner that would preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are committed to the political process in Yemen and we are seeking to ensure its success according to Security Council resolutions.

My country hosted in April, the Yemeni peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that these negotiations will resume as soon as possible so that the Yemeni parties can reach peace and restore stability and security in Yemen to move forward on the path of development and reconstruction.

Madam President, my country would like to reiterate its support to the Iraqi government. We commend the Iraqi achievements in combating terrorism and ISIL. We support all measures taken by the government to preserve the security, stability, and territorial integrity of Iraq in a manner that would preserve the security and safety of all components of the Iraqi people. Regarding the situation in Libya – this concerning situation, my country welcomes and applauds all the efforts of the United Nations and the Presidential Council to implement the political agreement. We hope that such an agreement would help the Libyan people in order to preserve the security, stability, and independence of Libya. Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Kuwait, and I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Russian Federation. You have the floor, sir.

Russian Federation: Madam President, the situation in the Middle East – this cradle of the world’s civilization – unfortunately remains a very tense one. The clashes in the West Bank of the Jordan and the manifestation of terrorism, outbreaks of violence, continue to lead to suffering for the peaceful Palestinians and Israelis. There is a worsening of the situation with the continuing violation of the cease-fire in the sector of Gaza. Against the background of the deterioration of the situation, we see an increase in radicalism among the Palestinian population, especially youth, and there is an increase in extremist views on both sides.

We sternly condemn any acts of violence which whip up an already difficult atmosphere in the region and gives much suffering to the civilians in Israel and in Palestinian occupied territories as well.

We are also concerned over the unilateral activities of Israel in creating effects on the ground. The Israeli authorities, in spite of the stern condemnation of the international community, continue to build and to expand settlement in the occupied territories, and at such a rate which should enable them to reach a point of no return in the near future. We have noted with great concern the reports under consideration by the Knesset of a draft bill which establishes a procedure for the legalization of outlying settlements and different facilities which have been built on private Palestinian lands. There continues to be an expropriation of lands in the West Bank of Jordan and there is destruction of Palestinian homes, and all of these activities undermine the realization on, of decisions taken to solve the Palestinian problem, without which Israelis and Palestinians and the world community cannot find a solution.

The situation in the area of conflict will change only if there are opportunities for a renewal of substitute talks on the basis of generally recognized international decisions. In order to overcome stagnation and a deadlock in the peace process, there should be active participation of the United Nations Security Council body called, the mechanism for the Middle East settlement, the Quartet of international negotiators. What was made public on the 1st of July in the report of the Quartet on the situation of the Palestinian and Israeli settlement has become a landmark in the context of international efforts to find a Middle East settlement. It not only gives a real description of the Palestinian and Israeli activities, but also contains concrete recommendations in order to retain prospects for a two-state solution. We are convinced that a sincere implementation by the parties of these recommendations would help in taking the situation out of its deadlock and overcoming mutual distrust.

We must, however, quite frankly, recognize that the provisions of the document are not being complied with, and this is shown by our appraisal of the situation in the Palestinian territories. In the context of international efforts to find a way out of the deadlocked Middle East peace process, we are, in Russia, carrying out a consistent policy with all of the interested parties. We support intensive contacts with participants in the conflict and in regional states and we reaffirm that there still remains in force the invitation proffered to the President, Mr. Abbas, and Prime Minister Netanyahu to have under aegis of the Presidency of the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin, a meeting in Moscow to discuss the optimal ways to find a way out of the deadlock. And we note that the Palestinian and Israeli leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed the fundamental readiness to carry out such an initiative.

Mr. President, we are for the earliest possible restoration of Palestinian unity on the basis of the political platform of the PLO and of the Arab Peace Initiative. And together with the Palestinians, we would – it would be much easier to fight for the realization of the legitimate aspirations for the establishment of a sovereign, independent state, which would be existing in peace and security and trust with Israel, and we support the desire of their leadership for Palestine for forming a government of national unity and to hold presidential and parliamentary elections.

We are seriously concerned of the situation in the Gaza, which continues to be very serious in terms of the humanitarian situation. There is a lack of drinking water and there is cuts in electricity and there are levels of unemployment which are among the highest in the world. All of this is promoting the radicalization among the local inhabitants, which is being used by extremists. We agree with the view of the international community on the need to lift the Gaza blockade.

Because of the difficult humanitarian situation, which the Palestinian refugees find themselves, the Russian Federation, in November, has taken a decision to provide a yearly voluntary contribution to the budget of UNRWA. Mr. President, next year, it will be 50 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 242, which is one of the basic documents of the generally recognized international legal basis for settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Unfortunately, we have to note that after a half-century, this outmoded chronic conflict is still far from being solved and the prospects for its settlement still remain cloudy.

The rather relative calm which has taken place in recent times in the area of conflict should not mislead us. The situation remains a tense one and one which is fraught with danger in the context of the conflagrations which are taking place in the Middle East region which are fraught with the most serious consequences. But this anniversary of a most important decision of the Security Council of the United Nations for Middle East Settlement should and must become for us a stimulus in order to achieve progress in this most important area of world policy.

Thank you very much.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Russian Federation. And I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Maldives. You have the floor, Madam.

Republic of Maldives: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Republic of Maldives wishes to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and his court officers for their report on the agenda item and to their continuing efforts towards finding a lasting solution to the various conflicts in the Middle East.

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

Madam President, peace is both an emblem and a byproduct of development. There can be no peace without development and without development, no peace. The situation in the occupied Palestine illustrates this reality. The Palestinian people continue to suffer under the Israeli occupation. With no end in sight to conflict and violence, basic necessities such as food, water, employment, working institutions, and systems remain compromised.

Over the past 70 years, generations have grown up in the atmosphere of hatred, fear and violence. Nonetheless, the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the incessant violation of human rights of the Palestinian people continued unchecked. The failure to realize the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people epitomizes the inability of the international community to work together to bring an end to the Palestinian conflict, the countless UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Oslo Accords, the Arab Initiatives and Quartet Roadmap which strive to overcome the Israeli occupation and apartheid system in place.

The perpetuating hostility and conflict in the occupied Palestine have compromised peace and security in the region for decades. And a solution is necessary. The Maldives reiterates its call for the full realization of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. The Maldives stands with Palestine in their quest to establish their own state alongside Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Madam President, the Maldives notes with grave concern the events which are taking place in Syria, particularly Aleppo, which the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs stated is our generation’s shame in his briefing to the Security Council. For years now, we have watched the violence in Syria escalate, the death tolls reaching thousands, and now, hundreds of thousands with even more displaced, injured and nearly 1 million under siege. The Maldives is raising its voice in the UN, doing all it can in support of the Syrian people, of the men, women, and children who are suffering endlessly. We call on all parties to leave politics aside and undertake the side of humanity.

While Syria gets destroyed, the conflict is causing an unending web of violence and destabilization in the entire Middle East region. The vacuum in many parts of the region has led to the birth of the so-called Islamic State, who uses the Islamic religion to forcefully legitimize the barbaric and relentless violation of humanitarian laws. The Maldives condemns attempts at attributing any terrorism to any religion, culture, or tradition. We condemn any such acts committed in the name of Islam. We condemn terrorism and terrorist attacks in all its forms and manifestations.

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

I thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Maldives. And I give the floor now to the Distinguished Representative of Japan. You have the floor, sir.

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

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

Japan stressed in the open debate on the situation in the Middle East at the Security Council in July that registration of and strengthening governance must be promoted in order to create an inclusive and tolerant society, resilient against extremism. These efforts will not be complete overnight and the international community must be united in making such efforts.

Madam President, with regard to the Question of Palestine, a number of resolutions have been adopted this session of the General Assembly. However, we should not consider that enough international effort has been made to bring about a peaceful solution to the issue with these resolutions. Now more than ever, we need actions that have tangible impact on the ground.

Taking a look at Palestine, it seems that we have actually moved away from achieving a two-state solution. Settlement activities by Israel continue in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The settlement activities are in violation of international law. Japan calls upon Israel to immediately freeze such activities.

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

Japan stands ready to cooperate with initiatives which will have positive impact to promoting a two-state solution. Also, we have continued our own efforts to create an environment more conducive to peace negotiations.

One such example is Jericho Agro Industrial Park, the flagship project of our corridor for peace and prosperity initiative. We have continuously invested in the medium-to-long-term project to promote the sustainability of the Palestinian economy in cooperation with Israel, Jordan, and Palestine. The project is approaching its tenth year, and now we have three Palestinian companies operating, creating jobs. We envisage that in the coming years, the products made in the park will be exported through Jordan to the region and beyond. We believe that more sustainable Palestinian economy will make a two-state – the two-state solution more viable and cooperation among the parties through the project enhances the spirit of coexistence.

Achieving a two-state solution means achieving coexistence of Israel and Palestine. In order to facilitate confidence-building between the two, Japan has invited future leaders in various fields from both sides to Japan since 1997. During their stay in Japan, they have a chance to engage in various activities together and exchange their views. We have continued this program every year for about 20 years, and over 200 people have participated so far. I, myself, had a chance to meet with one of the participants from the Israel side. He greatly appreciated the experience he had, telling me that he had never had a chance to talk with any Palestinians in-depth before the program. Next month, we are looking forward to welcoming 10 people, five Israelis and five Palestinians. There is no easy solution to the Palestinian Question, but we believe that even when political process is stagnant, there is something we can do to create an environment more conducive to peace. Japan stands ready to continue its efforts together with the international community.

Madam President, Middle East today is awash with issues, many of which are symptoms of deeper problems. While symptoms themselves are often quite difficult, we must keep in mind the necessity of embodying inclusiveness and coexistence in the region to achieve enduring peace. If the parties cannot share a hope for such a future, it is very difficult for them to sit down and negotiate. Japan believes that governance, inclusiveness, and coexistence are the keys to bring peace to the region with great diversity. Japan will continue to engage in the region with this perspective in mind.

I thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Japan.

Colleagues, we have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item, and before moving on to the voting section, I would like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/71/L.8 and A/71/L.22 will be taken after we take action on draft resolutions A/71/L.18, A/71/L.19, A/71/L.20, and A/71/L.22, which on the Agenda item 35. The General Assembly has thus considered this stage – concluded this stage of its consideration of Agenda item 34.

Colleagues, the General Assembly will now resume – will resume its consideration of Agenda item 35, entitled the Question of Palestine, to take action on Draft Resolutions A/71/L.18, entitled Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; A/71/L.19, entitled Division for Palestine Rights of the Secretariat; A/71/L.20, entitled Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat; and A/71/L.21, entitled Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine.

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

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

Representative of the Secretariat: Thank you, Madam. Thank you, Madam President. I'd like to inform the Assembly through you, Madam President, a oral revision on L.18. An oral revision on A/71/L.18 that the Secretariat has been requested to announce by the cosponsors.

In Draft Resolution L.18, there is a footnote, footnote number 7. Footnote number 7 currently reads UNCTAD/APP/2016/1. That document symbol in footnote 7 of L.18 is hereby revised as follows: TD/B/63/3. I read it again. T like Trusteeship Council, T; D, like December. So T-D/B; B like Belize/63/3. Again, TD/B/63/3 is the document's symbol that should appear in footnote number 7 of L.18 according to this oral revision.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Secretariat. We shall now proceed to consider Draft Resolutions L.18 as orally revised, L.19, L.20, and L.21. Before giving the floor for explanations of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I give the floor to the Representative of Israel.

Israel: Thank you, Madam President. Thank you. I would like to begin by addressing the deadly fires that have been raging in Israel for over a week and have been put out in the past two days. As a consequence of these fires, dozens of Israeli citizens have been hospitalized and tens of thousands were forced to evacuate from their homes. Fortunately, no lives were lost in this catastrophe, but hundreds of families watched their homes disintegrated in front of them and saw the place of their precious family moments go up in smoke. Sadly, some, including Hamas, choose this moment of tragedy to celebrate this terrible human loss and even to encourage further deliberate acts of arson. While these fires brought about such appalling and heartless behavior, this tragedy has also brought out the best of humanity. Nations from around the world came to our aid when we needed it the most. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have already supplied crucial help; Cyprus, Greece, Italy, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Croatia, France, Spain, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Palestinian Authority, and all other states which offered their assistance. Let me add that the sight of Israeli and Palestinian fire fighters standing side by side to fight this fire is a symbol of hope for the future.

Madam President, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations adopted a resolution which recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states living side by side, the Partition Resolution. While the State of Israel accepted this resolution, the Arab world rejected it and launched a war against the newly established state. Sixty-nine years later, it is shameful to see how this important date has become an annual event dedicated to bashing Israel in the UN and how some countries, many of them – many of which spoke here today and yesterday, have yet to accept the existence of Israel in the Middle East and abuse this floor to spread baseless allegations against my country. The assemblies convening here today to vote on a series of resolutions that serves those who prefer to promote a biased narrative which does not serve either side.

The six resolutions that are being considered here today not only fail to promote dialogue or build trust, but they also create an organizational infrastructure that abuses UN funding to allow anti-Israel activities to take place under UN auspice. At a time when the world is facing many devastating conflicts and humanitarian disasters, it is regrettable to see that this assembly, once again, is willing to adopt a resolution that divert previous financial resources to wasteful and politicized bodies whose only purpose is to attack Israel. These bodies include the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, the only UN Secretariat bodies that are dedicated solely to once specific conflict, or more precisely, to the public relations activities of one side to this conflict, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People which is a hotbed for anti-Israeli activity.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is tasked with promoting the Palestinian political agenda in the UN. The Committee organized UN events and international conferences specializing in presenting false facts and half-truths and promoting an agenda clearly directed against Israel. This committee has accredited a number of NGOs, some of which call for the boycott of Israel, and they do so as invited guests of the Committee at UN events held on UN premises. This outrageous committee is being supported by an office in the UN Secretariat, the Division for Palestinian Rights, DPR. The DPR runs the UN Anti-Israel Propaganda Program, mobilizing the resources of the UN Department of Political Affairs to promote their agenda. Such a department is unparalleled in this institution. There is no other office in the UN Secretariat that runs a propaganda program against a member state of the UN and does so using UN resources.

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

Unfortunately, the recent international media seminar on peace in the Middle East organized by the DPI, which took place in August 2016 in Pretoria, South Africa, was an unfortunate reminder of all-too-common distortion and manipulation of information by a UN body. As is evident from the seminar's discussion, debate, and panel, this was a completely one-sided event presenting only the Palestinian narrative. Shamefully, some of the speakers expressed open sympathy with the BDS Movement, which is conducting a global campaign of misinformation and outright slander against Israel. In light of this information, it is quite baffling why the UN, which faces a severe budgetary deficit, would spend approximately $6.5 million on the – a year, sorry, on these bodies which are dedicated solely to promoting the Palestinian narrative. Those who vote in favor of this resolution should ask themselves, why is the UN giving this money to promote a purely anti-Israel agenda instead of allocating it to those who are in dire need of the humanitarian assistance?

Madam President, these outrageous and wasteful resolutions are not only counterproductive but they also become more detached from reality with each year passing – with each passing year. Since September 2015, terror attack against Israelis have claimed the lives of 42 citizens and injured over 600. Yet, this resolution contained no mention of these victims, let alone take a stand condemning the incitement which fuels the vile acts of terror that brought about these terrible fates. Furthermore, the resolution under discussion does not – do not mention internationally recognized terror organization Hamas, not even once. This is an organization which fire rockets toward Israel and build terror tunnels in a clear threat to the safety and security of Israeli citizens and the population of Gaza alike. The list can go on and on, yet the bottom line is very clear. Selective and biased resolution will not bring the two sides together, and will not drive – will only drive them further part.

Another concerning element of this resolution is a shameful refusal to use the term Temple Mount. The Temple Mount, what we call Har HaBáyit in Hebrew, is the holiest site in the Jewish faith, a place sacred to all Abrahamic religion: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Yet two of the resolution which will be voted on here today omit any reference to the Jewish or Christian connection to the Temple Mount. Is a testament – I mean, this deliberate omission is about much more than just words on paper. This is a testament to the persistent refusal of the Palestinians and their supporter to recognize the historical connection of the Jewish people to this holy site and to the City of Jerusalem.

Madam President, the bitter reality is the distinct proposed resolution offer one-sided account of the situation, and only perpetuate a zero sum approach to the conflict. They send a message that the only way to support the Palestinians is by criticizing Israel. The idea is in strong contradiction to the cooperation we have witnessed just recently between the side in a time of stress. with this just recently between the sides in a time of stress. Let no one delude themself; supporting this resolution and the inherent bias against Israel at the UN will not advance the cause of peace. It will only make peace harder to achieve.

I call on the members who genuinely wish to assist in achieving a durable solution for Israel and the Palestinian to take a stand against these resolution and take steps to facilitate direct negotiation without precondition between the parties.

I thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Israel.

Colleagues, we have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the vote. The Assembly will now take a decision on Draft Resolutions L.18 as orally revised, L.19, L.20, and L.21. First one, L.18, as orally revised entitled, Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

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

Representative of the Secretariat.: Thank you, Madam President. I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of A/71/L.18 as orally revised: Bangladesh, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali, and Vietnam.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: Thank the Secretariat. Colleagues, a recorded vote has been requested. We shall now begin the voting process. Those in favor of Draft Resolution L.18 as orally revised, please signify, those against and then there’re abstentions.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly is now voting on Draft Resolution A/71/L.18 entitled Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People as orally revised. Will all delegations kindly confirm that their votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. Please lock the machine.

Chair: Colleagues, the result of the vote is as follows: in favor, 100; against, 9; abstentions, 55. Draft Resolution L.18 as orally revised is adopted.

Colleagues, we turn next to Draft Resolution L.18 – L, sorry, 19 entitled, Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat.

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

Representative of the Secretariat: Thank you, Madam President. I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of L.19: The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malysia, Mali, and Vietnam.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: Colleagues, a recorded vote has been requested. We shall now begin the voting process. Those in favor of Draft Resolution L.19, please signify, and those against, and then their abstentions.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly is now voting on Draft Resolution L.19, L.19 entitled Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. Will all delegations kindly confirm that their votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. Please lock the machine.

Chair: The result of the vote is as follows: in favor, 98; against, 9; abstentions, 57. Draft Resolution L.19 is adopted.

We now turn to Draft Resolution L.20 entitled Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat.

And I give the floor to the Representative of the Secretariat.

Representative of the Secretariat: Madam President, I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of L.20: Belarus, The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Mali.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. We shall now begin the voting process. Those in favor of Draft Resolution L.20, please signify, and then there's those against, and then there’re abstentions.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly is now voting on Draft Resolution L.20, L.20 entitled Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. Will all delegations kindly confirm that their votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. Please lock the machine.

Chair: Colleagues, the result of the vote is as follows: In favor, 153; against, 7; abstentions, 7. Draft Resolution L.20 is adopted.

The Assembly will now take a decision on Draft Resolution L.21 entitled, Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine.

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

Representative of the Secretariat: Madam President, I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of L.21: Bangladesh, Belarus, The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali, and Vietnam.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: Thank you. Colleagues, a recorded vote has been requested, and we shall now begin the voting process. Those of favor of Draft Resolution L.21, please signify, those against, and abstentions.

Thank you.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly is now voting on Draft Resolution L.21, L.21 entitled Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine. Will all delegations kindly confirm that their cotes votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. Please lock the machine.

Chair: Colleagues, the result of the vote is as follows: in favor 153; against, 7; abstentions, 7. Draft Resolution L.21 is adopted.

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

I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Mexico.

Mexico: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, my delegation wishes to make an explanation of vote concerning Resolution L.19 as follows: Mexico recognizes the function that should be performed by the organization to heighten awareness and support the international plan with regard to the rights of the Palestinian people and the urgent need to achieve a comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian situation on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

However, Mexico wishes to stress the importance of making more reasonable and efficient, rational and efficient uses of the resources of the division of the Secretariat on Palestinian's rights in the performance of its duties. Mexico supports the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, and that this be sought through a comprehensive, just, and lasting, and true settlement of the Palestinian and Israeli problem, so that there be a two-state solution that live in peace with international secure and internationally recognized frontiers.

Thank you, Madam.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Mexico, and I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Singapore.

Singapore: Thank you, Madam President. I have the honor to speak in explanation of vote of the adoption of Resolutions L.18 to L.21. Madam President, Singapore voted in favor of Resolution A/71/L.18, Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the understanding that the reference in OP2 to the achievement of the two-state resolution on the basis of pre-1967 borders should be interpreted in the same manner as set out in OP1 of Resolution A/71/L.21 entitled, Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine, namely the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders based on the pre-1967 borders.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Singapore, and I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Slovakia.

European Union: Thank you, Madam President. I'm making an explanation of vote on the Draft Resolution L.21, Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine. Madam President, I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union. The EU wishes to thank the Palestinian delegations for the successful outcome of our negotiations on a number of resolutions on which action is taken by the General Assembl7. As an outcome of these negotiations, the EU confirms its consolidated voted pattern on these resolutions.

At this point in time, we would like to put on record that with regard to all resolutions that are adopted during the 71st Session of the General Assembly, the EU and its member states consider that whenever Palestinian government is mentioned, this refers to the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the use of the term Palestine in any of these resolutions cannot be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine, and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the member states on this issue, and hence on the question of the validity of an accession to the conventions and treaties mentioned therein.

We also point out the European Union as a whole has not expressed a legal qualification with regard to the term forced displacement used in a number of resolutions submitted under item 38 and item 55.

Madam President, some of the resolutions adopted today also refer to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The EU is concerned that warring developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Temple Mount al-Haram al-Sharif. The EU recalls that special significance of the holy sites and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1976 for the Temple Mount al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan’s special role.

The EU stresses the need for language on the holy sites of Jerusalem to reflect their importance and historical significance for the three monotheistic religions and to respect religious and cultural sensitivities. The EU recalls that the terminology used in the resolutions doesn’t imply change of its stance on the Temple Mount al-Haram al-Sharif.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the representative, Distinguished Representative of Slovakia on behalf of the European Union and I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Uruguay – beg your pardon, Paraguay.

REPUBLIC OF Paraguay: Madam President, my delegation would like to make an explanation vote on L.18 and L.19. The Republic of Paraguay firmly believes that dialogue and negotiation, direct negotiation, and good faith between the parties, these are the only ways to achieve just and sustainable peace and the resumption of the negotiations and the international communities should support this. The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms the need to have a just conflict to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and other relevant decisions. Two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live together side by side in peace within secure internationally recognized frontiers

The Republic of Paraguay believe that this resolutions will not contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflict between the parties, and that is why we abstained.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of Paraguay. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of Agenda item 35. General Assembly will now resume its consideration of Agenda item 34, Situation in the Middle East, to take action on Draft Resolutions L.8, entitled the Syrian Golan, and L.22, entitled Jerusalem.

Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions, one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on the two draft resolutions before and after action is taken on both draft resolutions. The Assembly will now take a decision on Draft Resolution L.8 entitled the Syrian Golan, and L.22 entitled Jerusalem. But first, L.8.

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

Representative of the Secretariat: Thank you, Madam President. I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of L.8: Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Colleagues, a recorded vote has been requested. We shall now begin the voting process. Those in favor of Draft Resolution L.8, please signify, those against, and abstentions.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly is now voting on draft resolution A/71/L.8, L.8 entitled the Syrian Golan. Will all delegations kindly confirm that the votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. Please lock the machine.

Chair: Thank you. Colleagues, the result of the vote is as follows: in favor, 103; against, 6; abstentions, 56. Draft Resolution L.8 is adopted.

We now turn to Draft Resolution L.22, entitled Jerusalem, and I give the floor to the Representative of the Secretariat.

Representative of the Secretariat: Thank you, Madam President. I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed on the L document, the following countries have also become cosponsors of L.22: The Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Mali, and Vietnam.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: Thank you. Colleagues, a recorded vote has been requested and we shall now begin the voting process. Those in favor of Draft Resolution A/71/L.22 please signify, those against, and abstentions.

Thank you.

Representative of the Secretariat: The General Assembly’s now voting on Draft Resolution L.22, L.22 entitled Jerusalem. Will all delegations kindly confirm that the votes are accurately reflected on the board?

The voting has been completed. The machine is locked.

Chair: Thank you. The result of the vote is as follows: in favor, 149; against, 7; abstentions, 8. Thank you. Draft Resolution L.22 is adopted.

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

I give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of Brazil.

Brazil: Thank you, Madam President. It is my honor to take the floor, speaking on behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Brazil to explain our votes. As we have done in previous years concerning the resolutions concerning the Syrian Golan, which was just adopted by the General Assembly, Brazil and Argentina voted in favor of the resolution because we believe that the essential nature of it is related to the unlawfulness of acquisition of territory by force. Paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or the threat of the use of force against the territory or the integrity of a state.

At the same time, I would like to clarify the position of our delegations with regards to paragraph 6 of the Resolution. Our vote does not pre-judge the content of this paragraph, particularly the reference to the line of 4 June 1967. Brazil and Argentina believe that it is important to make progress in the search for a solution for the conflict in order to put an end to the occupation of the Golan Heights. And, therefore, speaking on behalf of the governments of Brazil and Argentina, once again we wish to stress the importance of resuming negotiations to find a final solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan in accordance with the Resolution 242 of 1962 and 338 of 1963 of the Security Council. And the principle of peace for our territories.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank the Distinguished Representative of Brazil speaking on his own behalf and on behalf of Argentina. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the United States.

United States: Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to present our explanation of vote. The United States remains profoundly troubled by the submission of a disproportionate number of one-sided General Assembly resolutions designed to condemn Israel. This one-sided approach damages the prospects for peace by undermining trust between parties and the kind of international support critical to achieving peace. All parties to the conflict have responsibilities for ending it.

And we are disappointed that UN members continually single out Israel without acknowledging the responsibilities and difficult steps that must be taken on all sides. It is manifestly unjust that the United Nations, an institution founded on the idea that all nations should be treated equally, is so often used by member states to treat Israel unequally. The United States votes against one-sided resolutions in the General Assembly, especially those that renew mandates on committees that use valuable UN resources, because we believe they are counterproductive to the goal of achieving peace that we all share.

Of these annual resolutions, three UN bodies in particular reflect the bias, the redundancy, and the unnecessary cost of such resolutions: The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. These bodies waste limited UN resources costing approximately $6.1 million in 2015, but they do nothing to contribute to peace in the region and they perpetuate the perception of a UN that unfairly focuses on Israel.

The United States remains firmly committed to advancing a two-state solution. We continue to urge all sides to take steps to stop violence, improve conditions on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza, and move the diplomatic process forward. We strongly condemn all acts of violence and terrorism directed at unarmed civilians, including stabbings, shootings, arson, and vehicular attacks, as well as the statements glorifying them. The United States will support Israel’s right to defend innocent civilians against terrorism, and we mourn any loss of innocent life. It is critical that every possible effort be taken to show restraint and to de-escalate tensions.

I would like to reiterate that the United States has consistently opposed every effort to delegitimize Israel or to undermine its security at the United Nations and we will continue to do so with vigor. Our continued opposition to the resolution on Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and occupied Golan, however, should not be understood to mean that we support settlement activity. On the contrary, we view Israeli settlement activity as illegitimate and corrosive to the cause of peace. Israeli settlement activity threatens the viability of a two-state solution. And also moves Israel ever closer to cementing a one state reality of perpetual occupation that is fundamentally inconsistent with Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state.

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

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

Thank you.

Chair: Thank the Distinguished Representative of the United States. Colleagues, we have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. I now give the floor to the Distinguished Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Syrian Arab Republic: Madam President, my delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to the General Assembly for adopting, every year since 1981, a resolution on the matter. In 1981, Israel has decided to annex the Syrian Arab Golan. We thank the General Assembly for adopting the Draft Resolution A/71/L.8 on the Syrian Golan as well as other resolutions on the situation in the Middle East. My country would like to thank all countries who decided to cosponsor the resolution on the Syrian Golan and those who have voted in favor.

Madam President, the majority of the Member States of the United Nations continue to support these resolutions which reflect their commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter, and their rejection to foreign occupation, and their support to our full right to recover all our lands occupied by Israel since 1967. The vote in favor of these resolutions sends a clear international message to Israel, namely that the killing, the expansion, the settlement activities, the imposition of a fait accompli, and the annexation of land by force are rejected. These practices run counter to international principles including the UN Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Therefore, all these practices will always be met with the rejection of every party that seeks to uphold international rights and reject the acquisition of land by force.

Thank you, Madam President.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative Syrian Arab Republic. I now give the floor to the Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Palestinian representative: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, on behalf of the delegation of the State of Palestine, I wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to all of the Member States that have voted in favor of the important resolutions that the Assembly has just adopted and who adhere in word and deed to the legal, political, and humanitarian principles and rules enshrined therein.

The General Assembly’s adoption of these resolutions, once again by an overwhelming majority, is a reflection of the long-standing international consensus regarding the rights of the Palestinian people and the fundamental requirements for achieving a just, lasting, comprehensive, and peaceful solution to the Question of Palestine in all its aspects without exception. These resolutions are also a clear reaffirmation of the international consensus on the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid Principles, and the Arab Peace Initiative – a solution that is now in grave peril due to the violations, destruction, and rejectionism of Israel, the occupying power. Lastly, these resolutions answer firmly, clearly, and thoroughly the false assertions, distortions, and negative discourse we have heard in this chamber by the Israeli delegation.

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

I thank you, Madam President, and renew our thanks and appreciation to all delegations for their principled support. Thank you.

Chair: I thank the Distinguished Representative of the Observer State of Palestine.

Colleagues, the General Assembly has thus concluded this state of its consideration of Agenda 34.