



General Assembly 66th Session

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Question of Palestine

H.E. Mr. Morten Wetland
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

President,

The deep impasse between Israel and Palestine and the standstill, close to roll-back, of the peace process cannot be allowed to endure. There has to be a meaningful diplomatic path forward. If not, the foundation for a viable two-state solution will erode.

A main obstacle to an effective Palestinian state remains the occupation and the continued building of Israeli settlements on the occupied land. They undermine negotiations, and are illegal according to international law. Israeli must therefore end this practice.

We call on the parties to resume negotiations with a view to reach a durable political solution. In our view, the UN has a major role to play by mobilizing the international community and in providing a multilateral framework, supporting the parties on their path towards a negotiated peace.

The bid for Palestinian statehood has a legacy which goes back to the UN partition plan of 1947, and even further. In 1949, Norway voted in favor of admitting Israel as a Member State to the UN. We then based our decision on the declarations and explanations provided by Israel. Israel had persuasively explained why recognition and membership should not await resolution of the outstanding final status issues.

Since then, Norwegian policy has been based on the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Norway therefore stands ready to recognize a Palestinian state. Meanwhile, we fully support all international efforts leading to a comprehensive agreement on the outstanding final status issues, including the Quartet's efforts to resume substantive talks between the two parties.

(Check against delivery)

President,

Norway has consistently stood by Israel and supported its inherent right to self-defense in accordance with international law. In parallel, we have also supported the Palestinian right to statehood and the institution building of the Palestinian Authority.

At its last meeting in September, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee affirmed the success of Palestinian institution building. The joint conclusion by the World Bank, IMF and the UN, after scrutinizing the performance of Palestinian public institutions, was that the Palestinians are fully capable of running a state. Prime Minister Fayyad has succeeded in what he promised two years ago: establishing the necessary institutional foundation for achieving international recognition of Palestinian statehood.

President,

In September, President Abbas submitted the Palestinian application for UN membership. He reiterated in front of the UN General Assembly, the need to resolve the final status issues through negotiations. Moreover, he assured the General Assembly of the Palestinian commitment to comply with the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions, and to uphold democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

We take note of the report by the Admission Committee of the Security Council and the views presented therein. Consistent with our view regarding the Israeli application for membership in 1948, we believe that both recognition and membership would serve as incentives for negotiations to solve the outstanding issues.

Norway therefore supports that steps are taken to effectively reunite the whole Palestinian people and territory under one single political authority, in ways that strengthen the capacity to carry out the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations.

Recognition of statehood and accession to UN membership are issues that are best addressed in the context of discussions in the main UN bodies here in New York. It is against this background that Norway advised to postpone the vote on membership in UNESCO last month. However, when the vote was held in UNESCO, we voted in favor of the application. In our explanation of vote this did not imply a bilateral recognition of the State of Palestine, and we still urge the Palestinian leadership to focus on the main UN bodies as regards the consideration of these issues.

President,

Last week, in Oslo, the Palestinian Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad agreed with the Norwegian Foreign Minister, in the capacity as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, to continue the mobilization of international support to deepen and broaden the readiness of the Palestinian institutions for statehood. These efforts will in particular focus on the continued viability of the Palestinian Authority. It was also agreed to reconvene the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in Brussels on 21 March next year. This meeting will focus on ways to enhance the sustainability of the

Palestinian Authority, including means to strengthen private sector led growth in the Palestinian economy, and improving the situation in Gaza.

The Palestinian institutions rely on their domestically generated revenues to sustain public services to the Palestinian people. Two-third of these Palestinian revenues are collected by Israel and subsequently transferred to the Authority on a monthly basis. Technical studies carried out by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities conclude that there is a need to improve the collection system and increasing the clearance revenue. This would in effect reduce the donor dependency of the Palestinian Authority.

It is totally unacceptable that the transfer of these taxation revenues are postponed or withheld. Such unilateral acts violate unequivocal legal obligations contained in the Oslo Accords, namely the so-called Paris Protocol to the 1994 Gaza and Jericho Agreement. They undermine all efforts by donors, and threaten the Palestinian Authority altogether. The economic revival and security improvements we have witnessed over the recent years in the West Bank came as a result of a successful, tripartite cooperation between the Palestinian Authority, the Government of Israel and the international community, including donors. The continuation of this cooperation is crucial for stability in the Palestinian Occupied Territory.

Thank you.

