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**374th Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

CHAIR: I declare open the 374th Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This is a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly Resolution 32/40B of 2nd December 1977.

It is my honor and pleasure to welcome His Excellency, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly; Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General and Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; His Excellency, Mr. Matthew Rycroft, President of the Security Council; His Excellency, Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and Representative of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at this meeting; His Excellency, Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka and Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs.

I wish to welcome Representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and representatives of civil society organizations and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this special meeting. Our special thanks also go to Mr. Brad Parker, International Advocacy Officer and attorney for Defense for Children International, who has kindly accepted our Committee's invitation to participate in this meeting and deliver a message on behalf of civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, allow me at this point to make a statement on behalf of the Committee. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, as we observe in advance the 29 November solidarity day, let us remind ourselves the meaning of the day. The date 29 November was chosen as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people. On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which came to be known as the Partition Resolution. That resolution provided for the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state and an Arab state, with Jerusalem as the *corpus separatum* under a special international regime.

The State of Israel came into being in the following year. The state of Palestine is now occupied, being denied the same rights the State of Israel enjoys, including the right to self-determination and the right to national independence and sovereignty.

Today, 68 years after Resolution 181, we are witnessing a serious crisis on the ground once again. As Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson rightly said during his latest briefing to the Security Council, I quote, "This crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had any perception of hope of a viable Palestinian state, if they had an economy that provided jobs and opportunities or if they had more control over their security and the legal and administrative processes that define their daily existence -- in short, if they did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century," end of quote.

In fact, the matrix of occupation continues to grow in the Palestinian territory. Despite repeated calls of the international community to cease, Israel continues to expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem in contravention of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which both Israel and Palestine are state parties.

The applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has been repeatedly confirmed by numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, the latest meeting of which was held last December. Also, in Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which the State of Palestine acceded this year, the transfer by the occupying power of parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies is defined as a war crime.

Israel's only highways cut through the occupied West Bank, separating Palestinian cities and villages from one another. Israeli civilian now is applied to settlers in the occupied West Bank, while Palestinians are subjected to Israeli military law. While Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank enjoy swimming in pools in the summer, Palestinians suffer from shortages in drinking water.

In the 21st century, we should not be seeing a system in which one group is treated favorably over another. Indeed, frictions between illegal Israeli settlers and local Palestinian residents often lead to unnecessary violence, resulting in injuries and death, as we have recently witnessed.

Gaza is also often called an open-air prison, where access to the outside world is blocked through the land, sea and air. Prison is probably not the right word, as prisons have roofs, electricity, running water and meals. Most of the over 150,000 homes destroyed during the 2014 war have not been rebuilt, with many people remaining homeless. Electricity shortages are disrupting the daily life of 1.8 million residents, disabling hospitals and sewage and desalination plants. Over 90% of water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption. The poverty rate is staggering -- 40%.

This is why there needs to be a two-state solution, two peoples enjoying the same rights in their own countries, the fully independent, contiguous and prosperous State of Palestine living side by side in peace with the secure State of Israel.

History teaches us that when you are -- when you have an unhappy neighbor, you are not safe. Palestinians' freedom is security for Israelis. Palestinians' prospect is peace of mind for Israelis. Development of the Palestinian economy is growth of the Israeli economy. A winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics famously said that development is synonymous with freedom. The Palestinian people must be freed from inhuman occupation, discrimination and subjugation.

While 29 November is dubbed as the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it in fact is a symbolic day for the Israeli people, too, as the same Resolution 181 led to the birth of their state. On this solemn occasion, let us all go back to the spirit of Resolution 181, two states for two peoples with arrangements for the holy sites in Jerusalem to be accessible to people of all religions.

The United Nations has produced Resolution 181, has a permanent responsibility until the question of Palestine is resolved in all aspects. Today, our Committee refused its call on all member states of the UN and members of the international community to play their own part to contribute to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Thank you.

I now have the honor to give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft. The floor is yours.

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CHAIR: I thank Mr. Parker for his insightful statement. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank all civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine throughout the world for their work in support of, and in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Thank you, again, Mr. Parker, for your participation and very important remarks.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honor to announce that our committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many heads of state and government, from ministers of foreign affairs, governments and organizations, and in this regard, I would like to read out the list of officials who sent them in the order as they were received.

Message received from heads of state, President of the Republic of Indonesia, President of the People's Republic of China, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, President of the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, President of the Republic of Senegal, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, President of Nicaragua, His Highness, the President of the United Arab Emirates, President of the Republic of Argentina, His Majesty, the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, President of the Republic of Turkey, President of the Russian Federation, President of the Republic of Maldives, President of the Republic of Madagascar, His Majesty, the King of the Kingdom of Morocco, his Majesty, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Heads of government, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister of Malaysia and Prime Minister of Lebanon.

Received from Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Received from the governments, government of Tunisia, government of Oman, government of the Republic of Ghana, government of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and lastly from intergovernmental organizations, the European Union, and the very last one from civil society organizations, Presbyterian Church, United States of America.

All the messages of solidarity received will be posted on the websites on the question of Palestine, maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights. On behalf of the committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciations to the heads of state and government, ministers for foreign affairs, governments and to the organizations that I have just mentioned, and to all participants for their persistent efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the mandated activities of this committee.

Ladies and gentlemen -- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, before adjourning this special meeting, I wish to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the staff members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information, the Office of Central Support Services, interpreters and everyone who works behind the scenes.

At 3:00 PM later this afternoon, today, the General Assembly will begin its debate under the question of Palestine, where I will introduce the draft resolutions related to this agenda item and our rapporteur, Christopher Grima, will introduce the report of the committee.

We strongly encourage -- I repeat -- we strongly encourage you to attend and support the adoption of the resolutions. I would also like to invite you to this evening to the inauguration of a photo exhibit entitled, "Palestinian Children Overcoming Tragedies with Hopes, Dreams, Resilience and Dignity." It will be held at 6:00 PM at the GA public lobby by the curved wall area, followed by a reception.

I am looking forward to seeing you all this evening. Thank you very much, and the meeting is adjourned.