2005 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

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Top of Form

**SPECIAL BULLETIN ON**

**THE COMMEMORATION OF THE**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY**

**WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**2005**

|  |
| --- |
| ***CONTENTS*** |

|  |
| --- |
| ***Page*** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **I.** | **Commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People** | 1 |
| **II.** | **Texts of statements made and messages delivered on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 2005** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People | 4 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Jan Eliasson (Sweden), President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations | 7 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations | 9 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Andrey I. Denisov (Russian Federation), President of the Security Council for the month of November 2005 | 10 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, message delivered by Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations | 11 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mohd. Radzi Abdul Rahman (Malaysia), Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories | 14 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, message delivered by Hamidon Ali, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations | 17 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Abu Bakr Al-Qirabi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, in his capacity as Chairman of the thirty-second session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, message delivered by Abdullah M. Alsaidi, Permanent Representtive of the Republic of Yemen to the United Nations | 20 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigernia, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union, message delivered by Aminu Bashir Wali, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations | 21 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, message delivered by Yahya A. Mahmassani, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations | 23 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Chris Doyle, Director of the Council for Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, on behalf of the international network of non-governmental oranizations on the question of Palestine | 25 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Nasser Al-Kidwa, Palestinian Authority Minister for Foreign Affairs | 28 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Closing statement by Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People | 29 |
| **III.** | **Messages received on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| **A.** | **Messages from heads of State or Government** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan | 30 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of Algeria | 30 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh | 31 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil | 32 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China | 33 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea | 34 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt | 34 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | General Lansana Conte, President of the Republic of Guinea | 35 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India | 35 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia | 36 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mahmoud Almadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran | 38 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | King Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussein of the Hahemite Kingdom of Jordan | 39 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Khamtay Siphandone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic | 41 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Archibald Lesao Lehohla, Acting Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho | 41 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Ousmane Issoufi Maiga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali | 42 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Vicente Fox Quesada, President of Mexico | 43 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia | 43 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan | 44 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar | 44 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Vladimir V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation | 46 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mahinda Rajapakse, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka | 47 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan | 47 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand | 48 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, President of Tunisia | 48 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Ahmet Necdet Sezer, President of Turkey | 49 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates | 50 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Tran Duc Luong, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam | 52 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen | 53 |
| **B.** | **Messages from Governments** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Madagascar | 55 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | South Africa | 56 |
| **C.** | **Messages from Ministers for Foreign Affairs** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Rafael Antonio Bielsa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina | 59 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan | 60 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus | 61 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan | 61 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania | 62 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic | 62 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Borys Tarasyuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine | 63 |
| **D.** | **Messages from intergovernmental organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | **European Union** | 64 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | **Organization of the Islamic Conference:** Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General | 65 |
| **E.** | **Message from a non-governmental organization** | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | Caritas Internationalis | 68 |
| https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif | https://unispal.un.org/icons/ecblank.gif |

**I. COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY**
**WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

On 29 November 2005, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at United Nations Headquarters, New York, and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, as well as in several other cities, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

All States Members of the United Nations and specialized agencies and observers were invited to attend the solemn meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

At the meeting, statements were made by Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; Jan Eliasson (Sweden), President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly; Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations; and Andrey I. Denisov (Russian Federation), President of the Security Council for the month of November 2005. The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour, read out a message from Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority. Also, Mohd. Radzi Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) made a statement in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

In addition, the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, Hamidon Ali, delivered a message on behalf of Dato’ Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen to the United Nations, Abdullah M. Alsaidi, read out a message from Abu Bakr Al-Qirabi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen, in his capacity as Chairman of the thirty-second session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers; the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Aminu Bashir Wali, read out a message from Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union; and Yahya A. Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States, delivered a message from Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. Chris Doyle, a non-governmental organization (NGO) representative, also addressed the meeting.

Closing statements were made by Nasser Al-Kidwa, Palestinian Authority Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Paul Badji, Chairman 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, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People received messages from 22 Heads of State, six Heads of Government, two Governments, seven Foreign Ministers, as well as the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. A message was also received from a non-governmental organization.

The solemn meeting was followed by the screening of a film entitled *Route 181 – Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel* in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library auditorium.

A Palestinian dance performance by the El-Funoun dance troupe entitled “Dancing Tragedies and Dreams” was presented under the auspices of the Committee in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

At the United Nations Office at Geneva, a solemn meeting was held on 29 November. The meeting was chaired by Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, who opened the meeting by reading the statement of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ousmane Camara, spoke on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Prasad Kariyawasam, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Statements were also made by Saad Alfarargi, representative of the League of Arab States; Babacar Ba, representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; Dato Hsu King Bee, representative of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Kadija Rachida Masri, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations Office at Geneva; and Juliette Sayegh, an NGO representative. Mohammad Abu-Koash, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, made a statement.

At the United Nations Office at Vienna, a solemn meeting was also held on 29 November. Sheel Kant Sharma, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations Office at Vienna, opened the meeting and spoke on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The meeting observed a minute of silence in honour of all those who had given their lives for the Palestinian cause. Sumru Noyan, Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, representative of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, delivered the statement of the Secretary-General. Thomas Stelzer, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations Office at Vienna read a message on behalf of the host country. Other speakers included Rajmah Hussain, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations Office at Vienna, on behalf of Dato’ Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Hans Koechler, an NGO representative; and Mikhail Wehbe, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Vienna. Zuheir El-Wazer, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Vienna, read out a message of Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority. Representatives from 45 Member States and Permanent Observer entities, as well as officials of the host country, non-governmental organizations, other invited guests and United Nations staff members attended the meeting.

**II. TEXTS OF STATEMENTS MADE AND MESSAGES DELIVERED ON THE**
**OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH**
**THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 2005**

**Statement by Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise**
**of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

[Original: French]

A sense of shared responsibility vis-à-vis the issue of Palestine has brought us together today, on 29 November, as it does every year, to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Participants have come in great numbers to this meeting in response to the invitation extended by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, thereby rallying around the just cause of a people who have for long and through great sacrifice sought to attain their right to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty. I thank every one here for their presence, which attests to their commitment to peace and reconciliation in both Palestine and the Middle East region, which is cherished by humankind as a whole.

This year’s observance of the National Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 3376 (XXX), of 10 November 1975, which established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That anniversary is not a cause for celebration, but rather an opportunity for the Committee to reflect upon the many years of effort during which the international community and the parties concerned have found themselves powerless in the face of the numerous obstacles on the road to finding a negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. Our meeting today provides us an opportunity once again to express our unwavering commitment to move ahead with resolve towards an equitable solution to the question of Palestine.

This Day of Solidarity also reminds us that there will be no definitive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without the achievement by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights as defined by the General Assembly in 1974, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they had been displaced and uprooted.

The occupation of Palestinian land and the occupying Power’s ultimate refusal to relinquish control over Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, further complicates efforts by the international community and the parties to the conflict - Israel and Palestine - to arrive at a just solution to the conflict, that is to say, the implementation of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

There have been encouraging developments once again this year, including a rapprochement between Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, that is in contrast to the continued pursuit of illegal policies by the occupying Power and by the upsurge in violence triggered by the never-ending circle of attacks and indiscriminate retaliation.

The passing of Yasser Arafat, the national leader of the Palestinians, over a year ago has put the Palestinian people and its institutions in a situation that is very difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, his passing was also the beginning of a peaceful, democratic and responsible transition that followed the holding of the free, transparent and fair election that brought Mr. Mahmoud Abbas to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority. Soon thereafter, the first summit meeting in years was held at Sharm el-Sheikh between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The commitments made by the parties created new momentum towards the resumption of the political process.

Last September, the Committee welcomed Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank. That development should have led to the relaunching of negotiations within the framework of the roadmap, as well as the restart of the stalled political process. It should be noted, however, that, at this very moment, Israel remains in control of the borders of the Gaza Strip, including its territorial waters and air space. It also continues to control the movement of people and goods in the West Bank, thereby hampering any meaningful economic development on Palestinian territory, which it continues to occupy.

Moreover, the situation remains worrisome in the West Bank. This year, Israel has accelerated the expansion of its settlements in that part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Ignoring international opinion, it has also continued to build the illegal wall in occupied Palestinian lands. The creation of new facts on the ground is accompanied by another complication, related to the announcement of plans to develop other settlements in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem and around the Holy City. All those activities run counter to the obligations imposed on Israel by the road map and contravene international law and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004.

Recently, the Committee welcomed as an encouraging sign the international community’s intensified efforts to relaunch the implementation of measures envisaged in the road map and to facilitate dialogue between the parties. International donors have pledged substantial sums to rebuild the Gaza Strip following the Israeli withdrawal. The European Union, for its part, has stated that it is prepared to provide a third-party presence at the Rafah terminal between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. We expect both parties to cooperate fully with the Quartet and with other parties of good will.

For its part, the United Nations must continue to shoulder its responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until that problem is resolved in all its aspects. Ultimately, the definitive solution - two States defined by the 1967 borders and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people - will depend on the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

Our Committee - which is the only United Nations intergovernmental body devoted exclusively to the political aspects of the question of Palestine - will make every effort, in strict accordance with its mandate, to help the Palestinian people realize its rights and fulfil its aspiration to have its own independent and sovereign State. The Committee is resolved to continue to carry out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly for the benefit of the Palestinian people. In that context, we will continue to work to raise the awareness of and mobilize international opinion until the question of Palestine is resolved in accordance with international legitimacy.

The firm will motivating us all to resolve the question of Palestine and the resolute engagement of the Quartet, other Governments, United Nations bodies, international institutions, intergovernmental bodies and civil society organizations and associations, not to mention the dedication of private individuals, should help to create the broad consensus without which it will be impossible to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. I here reaffirm the Committee’s support for that noble cause. We are resolved to continue to work together with all Member States, international organizations and all actors of civil society.

I take the opportunity provided by this solemn meeting to express the Committee’s deep gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who has ceaselessly supported our activities and is working tirelessly to restart the peace process. His commitment to peace in Palestine and throughout the world is well known to everyone, and we are extremely grateful to him for it. I also thank the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council for their great interest in the Committee’s work and for their engagement in the quest for solutions to the problems of the Middle East.

We very much appreciate the participation in this event of many Ambassadors in their capacity as Government representatives. The many messages received from various heads of State or Government of United Nations Member States have been a source of inspiration for us. For the Palestinian people, they have been a source of strength and valuable support in the fight to regain national independence and sovereignty.

It is also a pleasure for us to welcome the representatives of our traditional partners: the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States, whose tireless support has never faltered. I wish to thank them for participating in this commemorative day and for their decisive contribution to the Committee’s work.

Finally, I take this opportunity to express the Committee’s appreciation to the dedicated personnel of the United Nations organizations, bodies, funds and programmes and the officials of the many civil society organizations and associations that help to improve the daily lives of the Palestinians in the occupied territory.

In conclusion, I appeal earnestly to all those present - representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society associations - to redouble their efforts with a view to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

**Jan Eliasson (Sweden), President of the sixtieth session**
**of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

[Original: English]

I am indeed honoured and grateful to have been invited to address this meeting as President of the General Assembly. We meet here today at the United Nations to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, as we have done every year since the late 1970s, when the General Assembly decided to establish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We continue to observe this day in order to support the Middle East peace process and to mobilize international assistance for the Palestinian people.

Last year, in its resolution 59/31, the General Assembly recalled the relevant Security Council resolutions and welcomed the affirmation by the Council of the vision of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. We also reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law. I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for what you and your Committee have done to remind us of that solemn and serious responsibility.

Let me also take this opportunity to express appreciation to all Governments, regional organizations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and individuals for their untiring work and dedication aimed at achieving lasting peace and security in the Middle East and providing humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

As we all know, the period of the past 30 years has been troubling and difficult for the region and for its peoples. Political progress has been slow or even absent. Images and realities of violence and human suffering have dominated Palestinian-Israeli relations. Lack of trust has permeated that crucial relationship.

Against that sombre background, it is gratifying to note the progress made this year. The Palestinian people demonstrated their commitment to democracy during the presidential elections in January. The international community welcomed the Israeli withdrawal and the dismantlement of settlements in the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank in the late summer. Last week, on 25 November, following an agreement by both sides on movement and access, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, formally reopened the Gaza Strip’s border crossing with Egypt, giving the Palestinians control over one of their frontiers for the first time in their history. I think we all note the historic significance of that moment. An important step was thus taken to fulfil the vision of a future Palestinian State.

All those who made this possible through painstaking and complicated negotiations, with persistent efforts and tenacity, are to be commended. The parties are encouraged to continue their cooperation on outstanding issues relating to disengagement, supported, again, by the international community.

Palestinians and Israelis must now build on those achievements and strengthen the momentum towards the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The road map, supported by the Quartet, provides a solid basis for the continued work for peace. The international community must intensify its engagement in helping the parties to end a conflict that for far too long has tormented the region and its peoples. It is crucial that Palestinians and Israelis now cooperate to the fullest extent possible. Actions which could aggravate the situation and increase suspicions or mistrust must not be undertaken. Violence and acts of terror must cease. Hope and a sense of direction must be restored to the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

In the meantime, everything must be done to alleviate the daily plight of the Palestinian people. Access and mobility are crucial for dealing with unemployment and poverty. International assistance should focus on capacity-building programmes as part of a development strategy for a future Palestinian State.

Let us hope and be determined that, with the full backing of the United Nations and the world community, the peace process will be reactivated so that we can finally see an end to decades of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and conflict. Both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples have had enough of despair and loss of life. They deserve a future of peace, security and good-neighbourly relations. Let us all intensify our efforts to make this happen. This is in the interests of the parties, in the interests of the region, and in the interests of international peace and security.

**Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations**

[Original: English]

I thank the Committee for the invitation to this year’s observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. For 30 years, the Committee has carried out its important work of promoting the Palestinian people’s inalienable rights in supporting the search for peace in the Middle East. A solution to this decades-old conflict has proved elusive. Palestinians have yet to see the beginnings of the establishment of their own State. Israelis as well have yet to feel secure in their own State.

Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian success in ensuring calm during that period had raised hopes for a renewal of the political process. However, the ensuing upsurge in violence seriously undermined the fledgling coordination between the parties, bringing back feelings of frustration and disappointment.

After the agreement two weeks ago to open the Rafah crossing, facilitate movement between Gaza and the West Bank, and reduce closures in the West Bank, a new opportunity has emerged to cooperate effectively and bring about tangible benefits in the lives of the Palestinian people, particularly among Palestinians who have suffered a serious economic decline and severe humanitarian problems due to the events of recent years.

I strongly urge the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships to work with each other, with Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn and with the Quartet itself to ensure that the agreement is implemented in full and on time. Again, action by the parties will complement the continued assistance provided by international donors to alleviate humanitarian suffering and boost the Palestinian economy.

Both Palestinians and Israelis will soon go to the polls in elections that will have an important bearing on the future of the peace process. The electoral season should not be allowed to prevent the parties from engaging in the essential work of building mutual trust and following through with the implementation of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings.

In addition, if disengagement is to be a springboard to progress on broader issues, it is vital that the parties give new impetus to meeting their obligations under the road map which they have accepted and which have been endorsed by the Security Council.

Palestinians need to be assured that the future viability of the Palestinian State will not be eroded by settlement expansion or by reconstruction. Israelis need to be assured that their security will not be compromised by failure to act decisively against terror.

I therefore reiterate the recent calls of the Quartet for renewed action in parallel by both parties to meet their obligations under the road map which encompass clearly specified action on security, Palestinian institution-building, humanitarian response, civil society and settlements.

Performance of road map obligations is the way to move forward towards the shared goal of a sovereign, continuous and democratic Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

For my part, I remain firmly committed to efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and the principle of land for peace.

Let us all work hard to help the Palestinian people exercise their inalienable rights and realize their aspirations to live in peace and prosperity in a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

**Andrey I. Denisov (Russian Federation), President of the Security Council**
**for the month of November 2005**

[Original: English]

This year was marked by substantive steps aimed at ensuring progress in the Middle East peace process based on the relevant Security Council resolutions. One of these steps is the withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip and from part of the West Bank of the Jordan River. This will enable progress, in accordance with the road map, towards the ultimate goal of two States living side by side in peace and security.

The Security Council unconditionally supports the work of the Quartet and advocates the continuation of the dialogue between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. Of course, progress in this dialogue depends on a number of factors, notably on confidence-building measures on both sides. Effective actions have to be taken by the Palestinian Authority to halt terrorist activity in the territory under its control and to establish reliable law and order there. At the same time, we must stress the need for Israel to halt all forms of settlement expansion and to dismantle settlement outposts. Of course, the legitimate concerns of the Israeli side with regard to ensuring its own security must be taken into account.

It should also be pointed out that without visible improvement in the everyday life of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, the degree of hope which exists now in the Palestinian lands may turn into disappointment, which extremist forces will not fail to exploit. In this context, ensuring freedom of movement of Palestinians and Palestinian goods, their relations with the outside world and clear observance by the parties of the principle of refraining from steps that might predetermine the outcome of the final status negotiations must promote movement forward along the path of a long-term political settlement.

In this connection, the Security Council welcomes the agreement on movement and access and the agreed principles for the Rafah crossing, reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 15 November 2005, and calls on the parties to take immediate action to implement the terms of both agreements according to the timelines established therein. The Security Council fully supports the holding of free, fair and transparent Palestinian legislative elections next January.

In conclusion, I should like to say that the Security Council is united in the view that the international community must take concrete steps to ensure that extremists do not undo the positive changes in the Palestinian-Israeli settlement. These changes must make it possible to resume the implementation of the provisions of the road map and to come closer to achieving the final goal, which is peace and security both for Israel and for an independent Palestinian State.

**Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee**
**of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian**
**Authority, message delivered by Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer**
**of Palestine to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

We meet today with all the defenders of international legitimacy and of the principles of justice and peace to commemorate together the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and our national, inalienable rights to freedom and independence, and to reject the policies of injustice, domination and occupation. Annually, on this day, the Palestinian people receive a message from the world reaffirming to them that they are not alone in their struggle to achieve their legitimate rights, which are guaranteed by international legitimacy and are supported by all who represent the conscience of the world and believe in and defend those lofty principles and rights and insist on putting an end to the historic suffering and injustice that have befallen our Palestinian people.

On this occasion, allow me to convey my gratitude and deep appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to Mr. Paul Badji and his respected colleagues, the members of the executive bureau, and to all the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the genuine efforts they have deployed to promote the realization by the Palestinian people of their rights.

Our cause has gone through many difficulties and significant changes since the day in 1977 when the United Nations General Assembly designated 29 November the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Since then, the peace process was launched at the Madrid Conference, which led to the signing of the declaration of principles for the interim period and revived the hopes of our people and the peoples of the region in the establishment of peace and stability. During those years, the Palestinian people continued their just struggle to achieve freedom and independence, and all States rejecting occupation, oppression and persecution have stood with and supported the Palestinian people. These States have called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its occupation and to respect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State on the territory occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just and agreed solution for the plight of the refugees based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

However, the peace process, despite the humble achievements realized at the start, has suffered repeated setbacks as a result of the Israeli occupation and its measures. Israel, under various pretexts and false excuses, refuses to implement the resolutions of international law and the road map and continues to deprive the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights.

The construction of the wall of annexation and racial separation continues, despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated 9 July 2004, which declared the wall unlawful, and to which the international community responded with resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004, condemning the wall and calling upon Israel to comply with its legal obligations as called for in the advisory opinion.

In this same context, Israel has continued its policy of confiscating Palestinian land to build settlements. East Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, has become isolated from the rest of the Palestinian territories and surrounded by walls on all sides. Its geographic character and nature continue to be altered. Its institutions remain closed and the identity of its people continues to be denied under various pretexts. Israel also continues to detain thousands of Palestinian prisoners in its prisons.

The peace process and the road map, welcomed by the entire international community and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003), as well as the final status negotiations, have all been under the control of the will of Israel, the occupying Power, and its expansionist plans, at the expense of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In addition to this, all types of oppression have been employed, including killings, assassinations, arrests, home demolitions, the uprooting of trees and the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure. Other measures have included the imposition of closures and sieges on our cities, villages and camps. They have been transformed into isolated cantons and prisons for hundreds of thousands of people, in violation of international law and norms, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights laws.

Under these circumstances, many significant developments have occurred, notably the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. This development took place after our late president, Yasser Arafat, planted the seeds of independence and freedom. It came as a result of our people’s struggle and steadfastness, and also as a result of your continued support. Despite the unilateral nature of this move and our deep concern that it has been carried out while the colonization of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has expanded and intensified and has been accompanied by the imposition of unilateral decisions and the concept of a State with provisional borders, we have dealt with the situation in a positive manner. We have striven to transform the withdrawal from Gaza into an opportunity to return to the negotiating table and begin the resolution of all final status issues, based on the provisions of international law.

The agreements signed on 15 November 2005 and the opening of the Rafah crossing have had an important impact on our people, for that crossing constitutes a link between the Gaza Strip and the Arab world, as well as a link to the world as a whole. It is also a first step towards unifying and joining the Palestinian territories as part of the journey towards the realization of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem at its heart.

In this regard, I wish to express on behalf of our Palestinian people and their leadership our deep gratitude to all who have made efforts to conclude this agreement. In this context, the Palestinian National Authority has initiated before, during and after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza efforts aimed at maintaining public security and order and imposing the rule of law, in order to provide security for our citizens, improve their economic situation and encourage investment. This is being done in addition to continuing efforts to enhance the democratic process. This began with the elections and will continue with the Palestinian Legislative Council elections on 25 January 2006, which aim at laying the foundations of political pluralism based on the rule of law.

We in Palestine have chosen peace and negotiation as the way to reach a just and comprehensive peace and achieve our legitimate objectives of freedom, independence and self-determination in accordance with international law, the road map and the vision of President Bush. Our hands remain outstretched towards peace.

The United Nations has played a central role in the life of the Palestinian people. Since its establishment, the United Nations has shouldered its responsibility with regard to this cause, and has been committed to the achievement of a just and comprehensive solution in all aspects. Over many years, the United Nations has made efforts to preserve and safeguard the rights of the Palestinian people and has always provided a legal and just basis for resolving the Palestinian issue. For this reason, I can only convey to this meeting our people’s deep gratitude and appreciation for this historic and important role in affirming our legitimate national rights, particularly in the last few years. Today, the whole world stands together against injustice and occupation. This is proof that the conscience of the world is alive and aware of the tragedy of the people of Palestine that has deprived them of their right to freedom, independence and the establishment of their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Peace cannot be achieved and freedom cannot see the light under occupation, domination and the denial of rights. May peace be upon you.

**Mohd. Radzi Abdul Rahman (Malaysia) Vice-Chairman of the Special**
**Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights**
**of the Palestinian** **People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories**

[Original: English]

On this solemn occasion observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am honoured to address this meeting in my capacity as Chairperson of the Special Committee established by the General Assembly to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. On this day, we once again individually and collectively express our steadfast solidarity with the people of Palestine.

On this occasion, I wish to inform this meeting that, earlier this month, I introduced to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly the report of the Special Committee reflecting our findings and observations pertaining to the human rights situation in the occupied territories.

Despite some positive developments in the aftermath of the Sharm el-Sheikh summit of February 2005 and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, the testimony given by witnesses to the Special Committee amply reflected the dire human rights situation in the occupied territories. Their accounts demonstrated the harshness of the military occupation and the ill effects of road closures and numerous checkpoints.

Moreover, Jewish settlements isolating or cutting off Palestinian villages are negatively impacting all the human rights of the Palestinians. “Ethnic cleansing” and “rampant expulsions” were the words used by several Palestinian witnesses to describe their miserable situation. Once again, the Special Committee was not allowed by Israel to visit the occupied territories and assess first-hand the human rights situation in Palestine. This restriction also prevented any exchange of views with the relevant Israeli authorities.

But the situation in Palestine, and indeed in the world, has changed since the inception of the Special Committee’s mandate 37 years ago. A new generation of leaders is assuming leadership, and dialogue and cooperation are now preferred over monologue and confrontation. In this context, the Special Committee is of the view that Israel, after all these years of denying the Committee access to the occupied territories, should revisit the reasons behind that refusal.

During our field mission from 25 June to 9 July 2005, the Special Committee visited Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic and met with, altogether, 38 witnesses from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Special Committee heard the testimony of eight witnesses with direct and personal knowledge of the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan.

More than ever, the Special Committee is convinced that the construction of the separation wall is violating every single right of the Palestinians - not only with respect to freedom of movement, but also the rights related to adequate housing, food, social life, education and health. The wall is affecting the very national identity of the Palestinians and their legitimate claims to territories which not long ago were contiguous lands.

As a result of the wall, Palestinians are losing control over a key strategic resource -namely, water - through the extensive destruction of groundwater wells and water pipes. Many rural communities are now forced to look for alternative water sources and often suffer from the ill effects of contaminated water and inadequate sewage and sanitation systems.

The wall also affects the supply of energy. The combined effects of the wall, military incursions, the confiscation of land for settlers and route closures have prevented Palestinian electricity companies from maintaining a regular supply of power or from attending to the needs of customers located on the other side of the wall. Moreover, many Palestinians in Jerusalem are deprived of electricity because, it is alleged, their houses were illegally built.

Women and children are still paying a heavy toll, owing to the persistent and harsh daily conditions affecting Palestinians as a whole. Rising unemployment, together with multifaceted restrictions on movement - including restrictions caused by the wall - have prevented Palestinians from gaining access to health facilities. Those restrictions have also generated food insecurity and a decline in nutritional levels. After the completion of the wall, it is expected that only 39 per cent of Palestinians will have access to health facilities and that as many as 120,000 children will be deprived of vaccinations.

Health outreach programmes have been cut off in some areas as a result of the wall, and mobile clinics have been prevented from reaching their patients. Pregnant women are increasingly at risk, as they cannot easily access primary health-care dispensaries and are held back at checkpoints on their way to hospital at the time of delivery.

Several witnesses spoke of attacks against children on their way to school, as well as numerous impediments caused by closures, curfews and long waiting hours at checkpoints or entry points to the wall. This trend seems to indicate a growing and deliberate pattern by the occupying Power to hamper normal schooling, especially higher education. Most students are unable to enrol in or reach universities outside their locality and teachers are at times unable to reach the workplace regularly. Teachers and students have to cross checkpoints on foot, risking their safety. The quality of education is also suffering as teachers are often compelled to be recruited from the neighbourhood and are not necessarily the best qualified. In the Special Committee’s view, inadequate education will hamper the development of skills and leadership among Palestinian youth in the coming years.

The number of detainees is again on the rise, with up to 1,500 Palestinians reportedly detained in Israeli jails, including 110 to 170 women and 300 to 330 minors. Several hundred detainees are being held in administrative detention for indefinite renewable periods. Prisoners are allegedly subjected to degrading and cruel treatment, including torture. The situation of women was dire, according to several witnesses, and the condition of minors was no less appalling. Minors were subjected to various threats, such as destruction of their homes or life imprisonment, and were sometimes confined in isolated cells.

In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel has also tightened its grip on water resources. Landmines are still a threat to the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, as they are reportedly often laid close to villages and fields. The burying of Israeli nuclear waste allegedly continues in a tract of land close to the Syrian border in the vicinity of Jabal al-Sheikh summit. About half of the existing Jewish settlements are to be expanded, and citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan continue to be denied their traditional cultural practices.

The Special Committee observed with dismay the ever-deteriorating human rights situation in the occupied territories and the occupied Syrian Golan. It has not been possible to detect much trust among the witnesses on the prospect for peace, despite several positive developments in the region and some actions taken by Israeli authorities in that regard. The Committee sees it as crucial that Israel take measures to restore trust across communities, on the basis that the two-State solution of independent States of Israel and Palestine existing side by side will soon be a tangible reality and that, as a consequence, just aspirations of all communities will be met.

The Special Committee sincerely hopes that the current developments and changes that are taking place in Israel will offer a window of opportunity to all parties concerned and will pave the way for a just and durable peace in the Middle East. The Special Committee, in that context, calls upon the Israeli authorities to show restraint and to take measures, in accordance with the obligations of the road map, that will contribute towards improving the human rights situation of the Palestinian people.

**Dato’ Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia,**
**in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries,**
**message delivered by Hamidon Ali, Permanent Representative**
**of Malaysia to the United Nations**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the honour to extend, on behalf of Malaysia and the Non-Aligned Movement, our warmest greetings to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, as well as to all of our Palestinian brothers and sisters, and to express our solidarity with them. We are commemorating this Day of Solidarity with the Palestinians, a day that continues to witness their continuing oppression and suffering under Israeli occupation.

On this solemn occasion, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its continued and unequivocal support for and long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and their leadership in their legitimate and courageous struggle and in their long-standing quest for the full realization of their inalienable rights, to become masters of their own destiny and to live freely in their own sovereign and independent State of Palestine, within secure and recognized borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Yet, as we observe this International Day of Solidarity, we continue to witness violence, death and suffering inflicted upon the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power. We remain firm in our condemnation of the harsh policies and practices of Israel, as well as of the disproportionate and excessive use of force by Israel against the Palestinian people, the destruction of Palestinian homes and property and restriction of the freedom of movement of people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We urge Israel to reverse the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and socio-economic condition in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We stress that there must be greater commitment and sincerity in the move towards peace.

The Movement continues to be concerned at the lack of real progress in the implementation of the road map more than two years since its adoption. We take note, however, of the recent agreement brokered by the United States to provide access at the border between Gaza and Egypt. We call for its full implementation as quickly as possible.

We urge the United States to sustain the momentum of securing full freedom for Gaza as part of the steps in finding a permanent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While we welcome Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, the Movement insists that the measure should be seen as part of the road map, not outside of it, and that it should be quickly followed by similar steps in the West Bank.

We would also like to urge the Palestinian leadership to seize the opportunity to build upon the advances made thus far and work to secure more progress in finding solutions to the question of Palestine.

Clearly, there is an urgent need for the international community, in particular the Quartet, to work towards ensuring the early and full implementation of the road map with earnestness and sincerity. It is imperative that renewed efforts by the Quartet to salvage the road map be further strengthened in order to ensure its early and full implementation. The Movement remains convinced that the Quartet can and will fulfil its role and responsibility in this regard. Concrete steps towards peace are important in order to give the Palestinian people hope for the future, lest they succumb to despair and despondency, with all its negative ramifications.

The continued construction by Israel of the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has only contributed to further exacerbating the peace process, undermining and destroying the very foundations of political dialogue between the two sides that had been painstakingly laid down by the Quartet. In spite of the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice in July 2004, Israel continues to construct the wall and expand its settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and continues the systematic seizure of large tracts of Palestinian lands and housing in East Jerusalem.

These provocative actions are certainly not conducive to the peace process and have raised questions about Israel’s real intentions. The Non-Aligned Movement urges all Member States, in particular Israel, to take all measures necessary to ensure compliance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15.

The international community cannot deny that any further deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would be detrimental to the cause of peace in the entire region. The international community must lend its support in order to mend the situation, which is imbued with mistrust and antipathy. Now is the time to act.

The Israeli Government cannot continue to ignore the agreements, accords and understandings arrived at by the two sides or by the internationally recognized mediators. Israel must abandon terror tactics in favour of constructive dialogue and engagement with the Palestinians. Clearly, the international community must do more to manifest its support for a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The international community has a collective role to play in finding a solution to the Palestinian question. We must all work together to facilitate the attainment of peace in the region. The Non-Aligned Movement and Malaysia, as its Chairman, have launched several initiatives in our continuing efforts concerning the question of Palestine. They include the holding of an annual ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement Committee on Palestine in New York last September and meetings between the Non-Aligned Movement ministerial delegation on Palestine and members of the Quartet and permanent members of the Security Council.

In addition, mindful of the need to promote a people-based global campaign involving civil society in support of Palestine, Malaysian civil society organizations, under the sponsorship of Peace Malaysia, successfully organized the World Civil Society Conference entitled “Peace in Palestine” in Putrajaya in March 2005, which was attended by representatives of civil society organizations from many parts of the world, including Israel. The Conference agreed, inter alia, to establish an international centre on Palestine for civil society in the South, which is to be located in Malaysia and serve as the focal point for the global civil society campaign in support of Palestine. It is our hope that the international campaign will be able to mobilize international public opinion against the continued Israeli occupation and in support of the early realization of a sovereign State of Palestine.

Finally, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and in Malaysia’s capacity as its Chairman, I would like to reaffirm, on this very important day, our firm commitment to ensuring that a just, comprehensive and lasting peaceful settlement is achieved on the question of Palestine in all its aspects. Rest assured that the Non-Aligned Movement will strongly support all initiatives and efforts to address the Palestinian question, which has been high on the Movement’s agenda at all times. The Non-Aligned Movement will continue to cooperate with the international community towards that end. The United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, must remain seized of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in its entirety, on the basis of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law. We look forward to the day when the international community soon joins the Palestinians in celebrating their independence and statehood.

**Abu Bakr Al-Qirabi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen,**
**in his capacity as Chairman of the thirty-second session of the Islamic**
**Conference of Foreign Ministers, message delivered by Abdullah M. Alsaidi,**
**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen**
**to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

Today, we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Palestinian people yearn to attain their freedom and exercise their right to self-determination, as do all other peoples in the world.

On this occasion, allow me to extend the solidarity of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and for the return of displaced Palestinians to their homes and properties.

The meeting today is an affirmation of our support for justice and international law. This year, the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People takes place against an encouraging backdrop for the establishment of the Palestinian State. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip is one of the fruits of the struggle of the Palestinian people and of the international community’s support for the Palestinians in their legitimate struggle to attain independence.

However, although Israel has evacuated its colonialist settlements in the Gaza Strip, it continues to tighten its grip on the Gaza Strip. It continues to control Palestinian seaports and the airspace of the Gaza Strip. It also continues to expand its settlements in the West Bank, with a view to absorbing the settlers exiting the settlements in the Gaza Strip and to creating political facts on the ground that will complicate the final status negotiations.

In that regard, we express our grave concern at the actions taken by Israel in East Jerusalem, which would lead to the isolation of the Holy City from the rest of the Palestinian territories. Surrounding the Holy City with settlements will also lead to the dismemberment of the West Bank, making the dream of a viable Palestine State no more than a mirage, unless the international community compels Israel to comply with the provisions of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the expansionist wall.

We also express our grave concern at the plans of Israeli extremists concerning Al-Quds Al-Sharif and, in particular, the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Encroachment on the Islamic holy sites will not contribute to peace or stability for the parties concerned. We look to the Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as the international community as a whole, to fulfil their responsibilities in supporting the Palestinian National Authority and enabling it to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by Israel and in putting an end to the blockade of the Palestinian territories and stopping the construction of the expansionist wall, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

In that regard, we would like to reaffirm the vital importance of full compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel’s withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967. We reaffirm the vital importance of respect for subsequent agreements and initiatives, including the Arab peace initiative and the road map, both of which provide for the establishment of the Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks and gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, for your distinct role and for that played by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It is our hope that the Committee will continue to discharge its noble task of sensitizing the international community to the grave injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people, who have lost their land to occupation and have been displaced from their homes.

**Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria,**
**in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union, message delivered**
**by Aminu Bashir Wali, Permanent Representative of Nigeria**
**to the United Nations**

[Original: English]

As we observe today the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I express, on behalf of the African Union, our warmest greetings to Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian National Authority, as well as our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

It is equally fitting, on this auspicious occasion, that we recall the first anniversary of the demise of the great leader of the Palestinian people, the late Chairman Yasser Arafat, who devoted his entire life to the pursuit of freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people, a goal that has remained the focus of the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since its establishment under General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX) of 1975.

Since the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was established in 1977, Africa has joined others in the international community to reaffirm, year after year, the right of the Palestinian people to dignity and respect, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Africa has exhibited unwavering support for the Palestinian cause because of our conviction that the Palestinian people, like all peoples, deserve to be accorded the internationally recognized right to freedom and dignity.

Africa has therefore followed developments in the Middle East process with keen interest. We consider the present plight of the Palestinian people not only a reminder of failed opportunities but also a challenge to members of the Organization to translate that vision into reality.

The significant milestones that we have attained on this matter over the years are cause for satisfaction but should not make us complacent. The international community should not let slip the propitious opportunity to advance the cause of peace, development and security in the region that now presents itself. The situation in the Middle East continues to require the best of concerted efforts from the international community, in particular from the countries of the region. Peace can be achieved only through accommodation and mature recognition. We all have a responsibility to encourage the parties to the conflict to cultivate good-neighbourliness, so that, in a spirit of give and take, the best interests of the peoples of the region can be served.

Africa reaffirms its long-held conviction that the Palestinian issue cannot be resolved by military or violent means. Violence begets violence, leaving in its wake death and destruction, sorrow and bitterness, recriminations and vengeance. The result, as has been too painfully evident, is an environment that is even further removed from peace.

The African Union therefore welcomes the recent efforts to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and commends the restoration of trust and confidence between the two leaderships. Indeed, Africa welcomes the understanding elaborated in the Sharm el-Sheikh document, which, inter alia, calls for the cessation of violence, as a major milestone in the efforts to address the plight of the Palestinian people, as well as the peaceful implementation of the road map.

In the same vein, Africa considers the recent removal of Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, as well as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the opening of the Rafah border crossing by the President of the Palestinian Authority, to be helpful signs of peace. Those specific steps should serve to galvanize action by the parties in particular and the international community in general towards a lasting solution that brings peace to the region as a whole.

Mindful of the fact that the Charter of the United Nations confers the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council, the African Union reiterates its support for the implementation of the Council’s existing resolutions and the Quartet’s road map.

Africa also reaffirms its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people. The acceptance and the realization of the vision of two States, living side by side within secure and defined borders, should strengthen peace and security in the region and permit the Palestinian people to finally enjoy the rights that many of us take for granted.

Next year, our commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People should be a celebration of the achievement of Palestinian nationhood.

**Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States,**
**message delivered by Yahya A. Mahmassani, Permanent Observer**
**for the League of Arab States to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance that the League of Arab States attaches to the important role played by the Committee in supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in international and regional forums.

I would also like to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to support that role until the Palestinian people can achieve their aspiration of establishing an independent State on their national soil, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and until they regain their full, undiminished rights in the face of the pressure exerted by the Israeli Government to terminate the work of this Committee and other United Nations committees concerned with Palestinian issues.

This commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is taking place following the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and certain settlements in the northern West Bank. Although we have recognized the withdrawal as a positive step on the right path, we hoped it would represent the start of a new era that would lead to an active political engagement aimed at the realization of peace and a full withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories.

However, what we see on the ground in terms of practice, in particular with regard to the expansion of the Israeli settlements, the construction of the separation wall and the judaization of Jerusalem, is not encouraging. We also note Israel’s continued control over the airspace and territorial waters of the Gaza Strip, the successive acts by the Israeli Air Force aimed at the assassination of Palestinian cadres and the terrorization of peaceful civilians, in addition to the complete disregard of the human rights of Palestinian detainees and prisoners. All these practices have led to receding hopes and increased fears.

We must also recall the important declaration by Mr. James Wolfensohn, the envoy of the Quartet, who has been supervising the Israeli withdrawal and the revitalization of the Palestinian economy since last October, in which he stated that Israel still acts as if it had not withdrawn from Gaza and still defers all necessary decisions.

These acts and the lack of decisions have become clear, especially with regard to the problem of the checkpoints. As we have seen, a solution was reached only after tireless efforts and negotiations with Egypt and other Arab States, including the direct involvement of the United States and the European Union.

The League of Arab States reiterates that the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip should be followed by additional steps, in order to achieve the progress required and create a favourable environment for the implementation of the obligations stipulated in the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings. That would lead to the full implementation of all of the road map requirements. However, almost a full year has passed and Israel has not fulfilled all the steps under the timetable that was adopted when those understandings were agreed to.

Therefore, we believe there is a definite need for serious international supervision through specific mechanisms, in order to achieve the desired settlement based on a clear peaceful foundation.

The Palestinian people have suffered from all of the Israeli practices in violation of basic human rights, in clear violation of international humanitarian law and the international obligations and responsibilities of an occupying Power. Aggression against and invasions of towns and villages of the Palestinian people, in addition to extrajudicial killings and collective punishment imposed by the occupation of the Palestinian territories, in particular their siege and closure for extended periods of time, further aggravate the situation, in spite of the fact that the Palestinian National Authority has made every effort towards reform in all areas.

The League of Arab States - which, at its 1996 Summit in Cairo, considered a just peace as a strategic option - also adopted the Arab Peace Initiative at the Beirut Summit in 2002 as a historic initiative, in which the Arab States declared their readiness to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They also showed their commitment to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, if Israel completely withdraws from the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied in 1967 and if an independent Palestinian State is established, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees is reached, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Only then would the Arab States be ready to establish normal relations with Israel based on justice, mutual respect and equity.

Today the League of Arab States is ready to do its utmost to support the Palestinian National Authority in preparing the grounds for returning the peace process to its rightful track, within the framework of international legitimacy regarding the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We would also like to express our commitment to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly with regard to the illegitimacy of the separation wall and the necessity to halt construction work on it and to remove what has already been built.

Finally, we find it necessary to remind the international community that a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine can only be achieved when a viable independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, is established. That is a fundamental condition for peace, security and stability in this important region of the world. Therefore, we call upon the international community, as represented in the United Nations and other concerned international bodies - foremost of which is the Quartet - to increase their efforts and to take responsibility for preparing the groundwork to give momentum to the peace process in the region, and to support the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to restore the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, as a basic guarantee for the establishment of stability in a region that has long suffered from the effects of war and injustice.

**Chris Doyle, Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British**
**Understanding, on behalf of the international network of non-governmental**
**organizations on the question of Palestine**

[Original: English]

Today we are gathered here to mark the day when the United Nations voted to partition Palestine, back in 1947. It is a sad tragedy that, 58 years later, the consequences of partition continue to be ongoing conflict, exile and occupation, and we still have one State missing. The conflict has cost many people so much. In the end, there will never be a winner, only losers and degrees of losing, unless there is a viable peace process.

Throughout the world’s global society there has been huge and massive interest and concern over the fate of the Palestinian people and the Middle East peace process, or, to put it more accurately, the lack of that peace. There must be more focus on peace, rather than just on process. That is a vital requirement, not just for Israelis and Palestinians, but for the entire region. A conflict that has lasted over 100 years needs closure. Israelis and Palestinians alike need security. Israelis have their State; Palestinians need theirs. In that regard, we welcome the commitment of President Bush to that outcome, as reiterated in the statements of the Quartet, but it needs all the members of the Quartet to be fully engaged. For that reason, it is welcome to see the European Union involved in the Rafah crossing agreement, but we would also like to see greater involvement of the United Nations in bringing about that viable State of Palestine. It must not be long in coming. There is a fear that it will be bogged down in temporary, interim phases or a State with provisional borders. It makes no sense to have two States in the region with undefined borders.

A Palestinian State is essential and essential now, but it must not be just any State. Palestinians needs a sovereign, viable State - one to be proud of - based on the 1967 borders, a mere 22 per cent of what was once their country. Only that will enable any agreement to gain acceptance amongst the majority of the Palestinian people.

That requires the complete, total and final end of the 38-year-old military occupation. A people who remain under occupation will inevitably resist and will fight the occupation, as history shows us very clearly. That, however, never excuses attacks on innocent Israeli civilians, but ending the terror of occupation will save many more lives than will walls, assassinations, home demolitions and the like.

We also welcome the evacuation of settlements from the Gaza Strip and of four settlements in the West Bank. Palestinians are now in control inside the Gaza Strip. The freedom to move from one end of the Strip to the other and the return of Palestinian land to its rightful owners are welcome. However, that is not a requirement just for Gaza, but also for East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The latest border-style terminals at Bethlehem, Qalandia and up to five other locations in the West Bank are yet more attempts to create facts on the ground that will only undermine confidence in any peace process in the future.

Gaza and the West Bank have to be truly free - by land, air and sea. Checkpoints have left the inside of the Gaza Strip; they now need to leave the inside of the West Bank. We have welcomed the end of the colonization in Gaza; we want to see the end of colonization as well in the West Bank.

The Israeli Government has taken much credit for the evacuation, but sadly, we non-governmental organizations have seen a net increase in the Israeli settler population and in the land area used by settlements and related infrastructure. So far this year, there have been an additional 11,000 settlers added to the 400,000 illegal settlers in the occupied territories - a rate of 1,000 additional settlers a month.

The Israeli Government has now demonstrated that settlements, even those in the West Bank, can be evacuated. There is no excuse to stop now from evacuating other settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Indeed, it must never be Gaza first and last.

The building of the wall inside the West Bank continues in clear and open defiance of the United Nations and the international community. In failing to adhere to both the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 and the subsequent General Assembly resolution, regrettably the Israeli Government stands once again in breach of international law. There is a clear duty to take action to reverse that destructive process.

The wall, once completed, will be twice the length of the Green Line, severing Palestinian communities from each other, their land, their water and their resources. Concern is also now mounting about the eastern part of the wall in the Jordan Valley. Action must include penalizing those companies that collude in the construction of the wall when it is in occupied territory.

Israeli activities in Jerusalem are also a major source of concern. The recent European Union report on Israeli activity exposes the seriousness of the threat to a two-State solution. Roughly 35 to 40 per cent of the Palestinian economy relies on East Jerusalem. Therefore, donor funds could once again be wasted unless action is taken. They may serve only to prop up an occupation instead of ending it, unless East Jerusalem is opened up once again for Palestinians.

All in all, once one includes the wall, the settlements, the roads and the military camps, effectively only 54 per cent of the West Bank currently remains for Palestinian usage. Before our eyes, openly, the two-State solution is being imprisoned in a grave not only of concrete and barbed wire, but also of hatred, anger and mistrust.

The other ingredient of full and lasting peace is, without question, human rights. That is universal and essential. Torture, house demolitions, the confiscation of land, assassinations and detentions without trial all serve only to exacerbate the situation. The levels of violence remain too high. Some think there has been relative calm, but that is news to the families of the 204 Palestinians and 36 Israelis killed so far this year.

Economic regeneration is vital, which is why the progress of the Gaza-Egypt border is so welcome. To be able to enter and exit at will is a key sovereign right which we also hope will be afforded to Palestinians in the West Bank before long. We also hope that safe passage to the airport and the port will be opened as soon as possible.

But the situation remains very severe. According to the World Bank, around half of the West Bank’s population of Palestinians and nearly 70 per cent of the Gaza Strip’s live well below the poverty line.

We would like to endorse the Secretary-General’s recent call of 16 November 2005 for donors not only to continue their support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, but to increase it. The Agency now has the onerous task of catering to the needs of 4.2 million Palestinian refugees. The rights of refugees, of course, remain another key concern of civil society organizations around the world. They must not be forgotten.

Non-governmental organizations also look to the United Nations and its Members as the upholders of international law, without discrimination. We hope that Members will take that very seriously and see that upholding law is in the interests of all peoples and all parties.

But right now, Israel is defying this institution. It is waving its fist at the United Nations, in effect boasting to the world that it can get away with anything and that it has a teflon status. That era must come to an end. Nobody and no State should be above international law and allowed to mock the United Nations. Standing up for the rule of law is not being anti-Israel; it is being pro-peace.

Civil society organizations have been active on numerous fronts. At this year’s annual United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace held in Paris, there was a clear emphasis from non-governmental organizations on boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns. The aim is simple and clear: to persuade Israel to abide by international law and to end the occupation - nothing more, but definitely nothing less.

Over the next few months, we shall no doubt witness in both the Palestinian and Israeli elections possible changes in Governments and parliaments. The Palestinian elections are particularly welcome, but they must be free and fair, and that includes freedom of movement for candidates and voters alike.

None of that, however, will alter the essential principles necessary for the full and final resolution of the conflict - a viable two-State solution with security for all, based on Security Council resolutions and international law. We want peace in Palestine, not Palestine in pieces.

**Nasser Al-Kidwa, Palestinian Authority Minister for Foreign Affairs**

[Original: Arabic]

A few minutes ago, we heard the message of President Mahmoud Abbas addressed to this official meeting. We will all participate this afternoon in the General Assembly’s important debate on the question of Palestine, so I will confine myself, in my personal capacity as a friend of yours, Sir, and of many of our colleagues here, as well as in my official capacity, to thanking you, the members of the Committee, and all the ambassadors and colleagues who have tirelessly supported and assisted our just cause. I also invite them to continue to provide such support and assistance. I hope that, when we meet next year, we will be closer to achieving the national independence and sovereignty of our State, Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**Closing statement by Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the**
**Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Al-Kidwa for his important message and for joining us today. We eagerly look forward to receiving first-hand information from him this afternoon on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. I would ask him to convey to President Abbas and Prime Minister Qurei our expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people in its struggle to realize its legitimate aspirations to self-determination and national independence.

I also wish to assure the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people of our Committee’s firm resolve to pursue its mandated efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Before adjourning this solemn meeting, I wish to thank everyone who made this meeting possible, in particular the 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, the interpreters, the translators, the authors of the press releases and all those working in the conference rooms for their dedication and high-quality services.

I should also like to remind participants that a Palestinian dance performance, to be presented under the auspices of the Committee in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, will take place tonight at 7.30 p.m. in conference room 4. The El-Funoun dance troop will perform “Dancing Tragedies and Dreams”. The event will be preceded by a reception to which everyone is invited.

Following this meeting, a film entitled *Route 181* will be screened in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library auditorium at 1 p.m. All are invited to attend the screening. The first part of the film will be shown today; the second and third parts will be shown tomorrow and on 1 December, respectively.

Once again, I thank everyone for their participation.

**III. MESSAGES RECEIVED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL**
**DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

**A. Messages from heads of State or Government**

**Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan**

[Original: English]
*(Unofficial translation)*

On the occasion of the International Day of solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Afghanistan, our support to the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular, the right to self-determination and the right to an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

**Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of Algeria**

[Original: French]

On the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to express, on behalf of the Algerian people and on my own behalf, my sincerest congratulations to the Palestinian people and their leaders.

This day of observance comes at a time when our brothers and sisters, the Palestinian people, continue to be denied their legitimate right to live in peace in the land of their ancestors and continue to be subjected to the brutality of foreign occupation.

This year, moreover, the commemoration of the International Day comes in the wake of the withdrawal of the occupation forces and the departure of Israeli settlers from Gaza. This must be followed by similar measures in all the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including the Eastern part of Al-Quds (East Jerusalem), and by a definitive end to the construction of the separation wall, as this will give new life to the peace process and enable the Palestinians to achieve their dearly held, legitimate dream, which we share and support, of creating an independent State.

Algeria, which has never wavered in its support for the Palestinian people’s heroic struggle, wishes to reaffirm its total solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people on this memorable occasion. Algeria is convinced that, like all peoples under colonial or foreign occupation, the Palestinian people will find, in the heroic commitment of their sons and in the ongoing support of the international community, the resources needed to uphold their historic and legitimate rights, namely the establishment of their sovereign State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The international community, and in particular the United Nations, must make every effort to ensure that this noble objective is achieved.

The road map drawn up by the Quartet and endorsed by the Security Council recommits the international community to working harder to encourage the emergence of a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question that is in line with the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and in conformity with international law.

On this solemn day of commemoration, I urgently appeal to the international community as a whole and to the United Nations in particular to redouble their efforts towards the full implementation of the road map without delay and the reinstatement of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to establish their own independent State.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which is this year celebrating its thirtieth anniversary and whose commitment and contribution have been invaluable to the just struggle of the Palestinian people, is called upon to take the lead in mobilizing greater efforts and support in favour of this noble cause, until the Palestinian people are finally able to fully enjoy their legitimate rights.

**Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic**
**of Bangladesh**

[Original: English]

On this auspicious occasion, Bangladesh reiterates its firm solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just struggle for self-determination and statehood. Despite adoption of numerous United Nations resolutions and many international peace initiatives spanning over a period of half a century, the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian peoples still remain unfulfilled. This Day reminds us of the pressing need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace on the land of Palestine which is at the heart of the Middle East crisis.

Bangladesh continues to believe that the full implementation of all the relevant United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) hold the key to a permanent and just solution to the question of Palestine. Removal of illegal settlements from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip are promising steps. These positive actions should be followed by similar steps in the rest of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and other occupied territories. We would urge upon the international community, including Governments, donor countries and institutions, and the civil society, for their continued support and engagement in carrying forward the momentum towards achieving a permanent settlement of the Palestinian issue.

On the commemoration of the Day, Bangladesh reaffirms its commitment to work with the international community in realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people guided by respect for the universally recognized principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions.

**Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Brazil reaffirms its firm commitment and support for the Palestinian people in their just endeavour to bring about their legitimate aspiration to self-determination.

Brazil welcomed the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as an important step towards the implementation of the road map. I also welcome the agreements of 15 November 2005 on borders, logistics and infrastructure, which should ensure decisive progress in the implementation of the road map and in the peace negotiations. Brazil is hopeful that these agreements will strengthen cooperation between the Palestinian National Authority and the State of Israel as regards improving the situation of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

Brazil regrets, however, that further progress has not yet taken place to halt the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, brought about by the construction of the separation wall and other measures restricting the freedom of movement of Palestinian citizens.

The Brazilian Government recalls the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice concerning the legality of Israel’s construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, as it clarifies, for the international community, the legal aspects of the issue. We encourage the parties to act in accordance with the advisory opinion handed down by the ICJ, in order to restore the status quo ante and build trust and confidence.

We reaffirm once again the responsibility of the United Nations, the Security Council in particular, for the implementation of its resolutions on the establishment of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State. In addition, we expect Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to allow free access to international humanitarian assistance.

Brazil is fully committed to the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side, within internationally recognized borders. Brazil reiterates its support to the work of the Quartet and stands ready to work with others who enjoy good relations with the Palestinian National Authority and the State of Israel, as a support group to the Quartet.

Brazil also reiterates its support to all efforts to put an end to terrorism and violence and bring about a permanent settlement of the conflict, with the end of occupation, based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and other relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

It is our hope that political dialogue be resumed, prevailing over violence, so that the Palestinian people can finally benefit from an environment of peace and stability, where they can concentrate on their development and prosperity and thus achieve their full potential.

**Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China**

[Original: Chinese]
*(Unofficial translation)*

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to extend, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, our warm congratulations to the convocation of the Meeting.

This year has witnessed the meeting between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders and continuous improvement of the relations between the two sides. The withdrawal of Israel from part of Gaza Strip and the West Bank marks a big step forward in the right direction for the settlement of the Palestine-Israel question. We appreciate these developments and hope that Palestine and Israel will seize the opportunity, overcome interferences and cooperate with the international efforts for reconciliation to jointly push forward the peace process.

The Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East issue. Its solution lies in political negotiations on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and the “land for peace” principle, and the founding of an independent State of Palestine in accordance with the road map.

The solution to the Palestinian question calls for political will and courage of the parties concerned and needs the lasting and just support and assistance from the international community. The United Nations has important responsibilities in this regard. China is ready to work tirelessly together with the international community for the early realization of peace and stability in the Middle East region.

**Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s**
**Assembly of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea**

[Original: English]

I send strong solidarity to you and the Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Today, the Palestinian people achieve great success in their work to regain legitimate national rights including the ones to found an independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

I reaffirm our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just cause.

I also take this opportunity to sincerely wish you and the Palestinian people success in efforts for a fair solution of the Palestinian issue.

**Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is my great pleasure, in the name of the people and Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, to affirm our continued solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people in their just cause, and our support for all efforts to restore their legitimate inalienable rights, above all their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The disengagement and the Palestinian Authority’s full assumption of its responsibilities in the Gaza Strip have again held out hope for a just and comprehensive settlement through balanced and genuine implementation of the road map. I am confident that the Palestinian people will rally around its national leadership to complete their progress towards that goal, and prove to the world that they are capable of implementing the internationally sanctioned vision of two States - Palestine and Israel - living side by side in peace and security.

It gives me great pleasure to avail myself of this occasion to affirm Egypt’s continued support for enabling the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate hopes for the establishment of an independent State in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem within the framework of a comprehensive, permanent and just solution to the Palestinian problem based on United Nations resolutions, international legitimacy, and the principle of land for peace. I also take this opportunity to express appreciation for your distinguished Committee’s intensive efforts to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

We look forward to an upcoming stage of multilateral international activity within the framework of the United Nations in support of international and regional efforts towards a comprehensive and just settlement that will lead to peace, security and stability for all the States and peoples of the Middle East without exception.

**General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic of Guinea**

[Original: French]

The observance, on 29 November 2005, of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People offers me a most agreeable opportunity to convey to you my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on the welcome initiatives taken for the restoration of peace in the Middle East since your election as head of the Palestinian Authority.

There is no doubt that the achievement of this noble mission requires enormous sacrifice and exceptional political courage on the part of the parties to the conflict.

In this regard, the major reforms that have been made, under your wise leadership, within the framework of the Quartet’s road map are greatly appreciated.

The Guinean Government, for its part, ever faithful to its tradition of solidarity, will spare no effort in helping defend, safeguard and promote the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in their thirst for peace and justice.

On this day of commemoration and hope, I would like to express to you once again my encouragement and unwavering support and those of the Government and people of Guinea.

May God Almighty galvanize our joint efforts for the creation of a free and prosperous Palestinian State living in security with Israel.

**Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India**

[Original: English]

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an occasion to salute the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people and to reaffirm international support for their goal of achieving a sovereign and independent State of Palestine.

India welcomes Israel’s disengagement from Gaza and the Northern West Bank. This is an encouraging development that has opened a window of opportunity for all sides to take forward the negotiations leading to the creation of a truly sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine within well-defined and secure borders, living side by side with Israel in an environment of peace and amity. We also commend warmly the recent agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on Gaza’s connectivity with neighbouring countries and regions, which we hope, would improve the lives and economic well-being of the inhabitants of Gaza.

We wish the Palestinian people an early end to decades of conflict, and rapid progress towards achieving their national goals. In this context, India appeals to all sides to desist from violence and to continue along the path of negotiations in accordance with the road map.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate India’s firm and principled support to the Palestinian people’s quest for their legitimate rights. We were happy to welcome President Mahmoud Abbas in India earlier this year and to convey our continuing commitment to assisting the Palestinian people in their economic and social development.

**Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Indonesia, the assurances of our continued support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The observance of this Day is in keeping with a decision of the United Nations General Assembly on 2 December 1977 and ensures that we do not forget the just and courageous struggle of the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to freedom, self-determination and sovereignty. An eloquent gesture by the international community, this observance assumes meaning only when attended by concrete action.

I am heartened that in recent times there have been a few encouraging developments in the struggle of the Palestinian people, such as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza in August, this month’s agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to open the borders of Gaza and to allow greater freedom of movement to Palestinians elsewhere in the occupied territories. The official opening of Gaza-Egypt border crossing in Rafah on 25 November is widely welcomed by the international community.

Following Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, the international community must continue to encourage Israel to make subsequent measures that will move the momentum for peace forward.

Yet the Palestinian people still face great challenges ahead. Aside from the remaining physical restrictions imposed by Israel through road closures, checkpoints, and separation wall, the Palestinians bear the burden of proving their ability to govern as well as to implement international accords.

I must therefore emphasize that lasting peace in the Middle East is only possible if the illegal occupation by Israeli forces is brought to an end, paving the way for a final settlement.

Moreover, the necessary machinery must be put in place to implement the road map until its final objective is attained: two independent and viable States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure, internationally recognized borders.

I also wish to stress Indonesia’s commitment to accept any role that it may be called on to play in the Middle East peace process in the spirit of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) adopted by the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta last April.

In that Summit, 106 nations of the two great continents committed themselves to supporting the peaceful settlement of the issue of Palestine. The leaders of the Asian-African countries expressed their abhorrence that fifty years since the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Palestinian people remained deprived of their right to independence. They remained steadfast in their support for the Palestinian people and the creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Plan of Action of the NAASP provides specific measures for capacity building - in the three broad areas of political solidarity, economic cooperation and socio-cultural relations - which is offered for availment by all nations of Asia and Africa, including Palestine. In this regard, there have been suggestions that the leaders of the two continents convene an Asian-African Conference on Palestine to formulate ways by which they can bring help to the Palestinian people in the framework of the Plan of Action.

It is important to note that among the ideals and principles on which the NAASP is based is the promotion of a just, democratic, transparent and harmonious society as well as the fostering of fundamental rights and freedom - including, of course, the freedom of the Palestinian people to independence and self-determination.

In this regard, I am pleased to observe the splendid political transformation taking place in Palestine today. Following the success of their presidential election in January 2005, the Palestinian people are now preparing for their legislative elections scheduled to take place in January 2006.

Speaking for a country that has just completed its transition to a more fully democratic system, I wish the Palestinian people all the success in this important political exercise.

Let me also reiterate Indonesia’s readiness to engage Palestine in an exchange of experiences in best practices on strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

Thus I am even more confident that if only the international community could prevail upon Israel to honour its commitments to international law and to the peace process, the dream of Palestinian freedom, independence and sovereignty will be fulfilled in our lifetime.

**Mahmoud Almadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

[Original: English]

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provides us with an opportunity to, once again, look into the calamitous situation of the defenceless people of Palestine who have been subjected to the most inhumane treatment for many years. Over the past five decades, the Palestinian people have been constantly deprived of their inalienable rights. Currently, killing of the oppressed Palestinian men, women and children has become the daily news headline of the world media, causing a great pain for all Muslims and freedom lovers all over the world.

How could it be acceptable that such an armed-to-the-teeth regime, while torturing and killing savagely and brutally the defenceless people, enjoys the constant support of the countries that claim to be pioneering in protection of human rights?

Continuation of the expansionist policies and repressive actions of the Zionist regime, as well as destruction of the heritage and identity of the Islamic and Christian culture of the occupied territories, have deepened the crisis in the Middle East where such a situation has not only caused the instability in the region but also has threatened international peace and security.

It is profoundly regrettable that such a regime has even been able to manipulate the Security Council through the exercise of the veto right by one of the permanent members of the Council. Would it not be an indicative of that regime's disrespect and contempt towards the world's public opinion? How can the construction of the separation wall be justified? The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice has not been heeded thus far. Construction of the separation wall for the reason of security is but a pretext for achieving the main goal of establishing a permanent boarder based on the long-standing ulterior motives and interests of the Zionist regime.

The international community should spare no effort to find a solution for this crisis which would ensure the unconditional repatriation of all refugees to their homeland, as well as holding elections with the participation of all people who originally resided in Palestine including Muslims, Jews and Christians, in order to determine the future political system of Palestine.

In this context, it is imperative that the United Nations, while recognizing the right of legitimate resistance of Palestinians, take necessary steps to induce the Zionist regime to abide by international law and stop all its inhumane and racial policies towards the Palestinian people.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on Islamic principles and values, has always supported all legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and believes that establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is the main core of any solution to this problem.

I hope that one day all Palestinian refugees return to their main homeland and live with their other countrymen in peace and tranquility.

**King Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

[Original: Arabic]

*In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate*

In this letter I would like to renew my annual message to you on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and convoy to you personally and to the members of your distinguished Committee deep gratitude and great appreciation for your continued efforts on behalf of the Committee’s mandate of enabling the Palestinian people to attain their inalienable rights and establish an independent sovereign State on their national soil, just like other nations that exercise this right or have attained it after a period of time.

The relationship of my land and people to Palestine and its people is a special one, involving organically intertwined historical, cultural and human ties strengthened by geographic contiguity and the two brotherly people’s origins. Since the origin of the Palestinian problem, Jordan has made continuous political and diplomatic efforts to ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with respect for international legitimacy based on the founding principles of the United Nations. These principles include the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means, non-use of force, repudiation of violence and cooperation with various nations and international parties such as your distinguished Committee. We take our values as a starting point, which do not permit us to stand idly by in the face of the human tragedy of the Palestinian people, who are denied the most basic of internationally recognized rights, the right to freedom and self-determination and the right to establish their own State on their own national soil.

The Palestinian people live under increasingly tragic conditions as a result of the continuing Israeli occupation and its arbitrary measures. These measures include collective punishment, destruction of homes and infrastructure, arbitrary arrest and targeted assassination of individuals on security or intelligence pretexts, all of which produce reactions born of despair and stemming from the oppression suffered by every Palestinian under occupation. We must work hand in hand with all who call for peace and justice and believe in international legitimacy to put an end to this ever-increasing tragedy, especially when we hold in our hands the necessary tool, the “road map”, which must be actively implemented and put back on track.

As you know, the road map is the only path to achieving a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to an independent sovereign Palestinian State. We therefore call upon the Quartet to increase its efforts to restart bilateral peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan welcomes the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, but we repeat our insistence that this withdrawal must be considered part of the road map, and that Israel must refrain from taking unilateral steps that might affect final status negotiations or create new circumstances on the ground. In this regard, we recall the position of the European Union on the withdrawal and express our support for it.

In this same context, Israel must fully respect and implement the decision issued by the International Court of Justice in July 2004 with regard to the wall, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is in agreement with the view of the International Court of Justice that the construction of this wall fundamentally threatens the ultimate goal of the road map, not to mention causing a rapid deterioration in all aspects of the life of the Palestinian people by partitioning the West Bank, cutting off communications between its cities, towns and individuals, and creating an inhumane disruption of the social, economic and political lives of its inhabitants.

It is our desire to contribute to the efforts of your Committee and to international and regional efforts to put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and ensure their legitimate rights, particularly in the face of developments in the Palestinian problem since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the cessation of constructive dialogue and negotiation between the Israelis and Palestinians. I will continue to engage in intensive personal contact with both sides, and with other active and influential international parties such as the United States of America and the Quartet States, to bring the two sides together for constructive dialogue and negotiation to settle all remaining issues standing in the way of peace, with a view to implementing the road map, ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and achieving the ultimate goal of an independent sovereign Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil.

I would be remiss if I did not close, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, by reiterating my gratitude for your commendable efforts to secure legitimate Palestinian rights, and reaffirming that we stand firmly beside you in the pursuit of these noble goals.

Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of God.

**Khamtay Siphandone, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic**

[Original: English]

This year the international community is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations, our only multilateral organization born to serve the interest of the entire humanity and the promotion of peace and stability throughout the globe. As we are celebrating the event, it is sad to note that the question of Palestine, which has always been at the core of the Middle East issue and soon will be at its sixtieth year in two years from now, has yet to be resolved.

The situation on the ground remains grave. The Palestinian people, uprooted from their land, homes and properties are disposed and forced to live as refugees until today. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic is concerned at the wilful killing of Palestinian civilians, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, resulting in the socio-economic debilitation of the Palestinian people.

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic reaffirms its full solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to exercise their right to self-determination, including the right to create an independent State in Palestine, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the principle of land for peace as the basis for a peaceful solution.

As the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian question deserves the full attention of the international community. In this regard, we would like to reiterate our support for the long-standing position of the international community of a two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, based on the withdrawal of Israel from the territory occupied in 1967 as well as the right of all States in the region, including Israel to security and peace.

Finally, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic would like to seize this opportunity to extend its warmest regards and best wishes to all members of this august Committee for their devotion and hard work in accomplishing their tasks.

**Archibald Lesao Lehohla, Acting Prime Minister of the Kingdom**
**of Lesotho**

[Original: English]

On this solemn occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho, to express once again our unflinching support and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for the right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty.

We also wish to extend our congratulations to President Mahmoud Abbas for his well deserved election to the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority on 9 January 2005. In this regard, we wish him the best in the daunting task of liberating the Palestinian people.

The Government of Lesotho views the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, which ended 38 years of military occupation, as a positive move that could put the peace process back on track. However, we are concerned by the increase in violence in the region.

Lesotho is optimistic that, with the necessary international support and cooperation, the recently adopted agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the Gaza-Egypt border crossing, and the subsequent opening of the Rafah crossing, will ensure economic recovery and thus improve the lives of the Palestinian people. However, the agreement should not be viewed as an end in itself and its delicate nature should be fully acknowledged.

Once again, we would like to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people in their search for everlasting peace, prosperity and socio-economic development.

**Ousmane Issoufi Maïga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali**

[Original: French]

On the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am very pleased to convey, on behalf of the Government of Mali and on my own behalf, my sincerest and most heartfelt congratulations to you and to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mali is convinced that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace will be achieved in the Middle East only when the Palestinian people can effectively exercise their national rights. Mali will therefore continue to work side by side with the international community to ensure that justice and the principles of international law prevail.

Lastly, allow me to reaffirm the ongoing solidarity of the people and Government of Mali.

**Vicente Fox Quesada, President of Mexico**

[Original: Spanish]

Dialogue, compliance with international law and the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations are excellent ways of ensuring the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Convinced as it is of this, Mexico, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, expresses the wish that the parties involved in the Middle East conflict will identify the mechanisms whereby they may return to the negotiating table and establish a just and lasting peace for all the peoples of the region.

It likewise considers that the road map proposed by the Quartet offers an opportunity to attain that end and hopes for its prompt and full implementation.

Mexico conveys its best wishes for the success of the activities to be carried out in connection with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

**Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia**

[Original: English]

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia, I would like to express our appreciation to Your Excellency, and through you, to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for organizing this commemorative Day of Solidarity with the people of Palestine.

The people of Namibia have followed with grave concern the ever deteriorating political and security situation in that region. In this connection, I wish to reiterate Namibia’s unwavering support and solidarity with the people of Palestine. We encourage the Palestinian people to persevere and carry on with the liberation struggle until their inalienable rights to self-determination have been realized, in keeping with relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly.

As we restate our solidarity with the people of Palestine, we continue to support the full and unconditional implementation of the road map and the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

**Pervez Musharraf, President of Pakistan**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to reaffirm, on behalf of the people and the Government of Pakistan, our long-standing support for the Palestinian people in their quest for the attainment of their inalienable rights, including the right to an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

This year the Solidarity Day has come at a crucial point. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza in September 2005 has been appreciated by the international community. Pakistan welcomes this development as a first positive step towards the settlement of the Palestinian issue. It is necessary that Israel continues the process of withdrawal in the West Bank as well in order that all occupied Palestinian territories are vacated leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. This is vital for just and durable peace in the Middle East.

It is a matter of concern that in disregard to the opinion of the International Court of Justice and the United Nations General Assembly resolution, Israel is proceeding with the construction of the separation wall which has aggravated the sufferings of a large number of Palestinians in the occupied territories. When completed, the wall will effectively cut off the Arab quarters of Al-Quds with the West Bank and deny the Palestinians living in these areas access to the Islamic holy sites. Also, the uninterrupted expansion of settlements close to Al-Quds would jeopardize the implementation of the road map and the creation of a viable Palestinian State. The international community needs to play its role in countering those policies and developments that undermine the Middle East peace process.

Pakistan firmly believes that the way to durable peace in the Middle East is through negotiations based on the United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Quartet road map and the Declaration of the Arab League Summit of March 2002. The vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security is the one embraced by the entire international community.

**Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar**

[Original: Arabic]

*In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate*

I would like to extend my greetings on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, established by the United Nations General Assembly on 2 December 1977 to honour the Palestinian people’s just cause and their right to freedom and independence, and to repudiate the oppressive occupation that continues to deprive this people of the restoration and exercise of their inalienable rights which have been internationally recognized by numerous resolutions that have yet to be implemented.

The State of Qatar, believing in the peaceful resolution of conflict, feels that violence and counter-violence do not lead to solutions, but only increase tension and instability in the Middle East as a whole. Violence only serves to undermine prospects for peace and reinforce tendencies towards extremism and terrorism, instead of encouraging negotiation and the peace process, which are the only path to a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East based on international legitimacy and the guarantee of legitimate rights to the Palestinian people and security, stability and peaceful coexistence to all the peoples of the region. In this regard, we welcome the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Despite its flaws, we hope this withdrawal will be treated as a step forward to be followed by other steps towards implementation of the road map laid out by the Quartet to advance the peace process for the benefit of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the region as a whole.

Israel’s continued construction of the illegal and illegitimate separation wall in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, is obstructing peace efforts and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian people in occupied Palestinian lands. It increases their daily suffering and difficulties by isolating Palestinian cities and towns and separating them from each other, thereby destroying territorial unity and the Palestinian economy, all of which obstructs the peace process.

In this regard, we call on the General Assembly and the Security Council to follow up on the advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice on 9 November 2004, which essentially says that Israel is under an obligation to cease construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and to dismantle this wall immediately. We likewise call on them to follow up on General Assembly resolution ES-l0/15 of 20 July 2004, which demands that Israel comply with its legal obligations as mentioned in the advisory opinion.

We also call upon the General Assembly and the Security Council to fulfil their legal and political responsibilities as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and international agreements arising from it, and call on States with influence, especially the States sponsoring the peace process and the States of the European Union, to redouble their efforts to restart the peace process in accordance with agreed principles. The international community must take measures to bring about palpable improvement in the harsh reality and difficult living conditions of the Palestinian people, and to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Fourth Hague Conventions of 18 October 1907 and the Regulations annexed thereto, and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in order to protect the rights of this people that has long suffered from oppression, cruelty and displacement.

Last but not least, a permanent, comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East is urgently needed to ensure security, stability and development for all its people. A mechanism for implementing the road map should be established as soon as possible, and both parties to the conflict should take practical measures in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 452 (1979), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and with the principle of land for peace. In this regard, the State of Qatar reaffirms its support for the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to realize its people’s aspirations to exercise their inalienable legitimate national rights, including the right of return, the right of self-determination and the right to an independent State on their national soil with Jerusalem as its capital. I must also on this occasion make a plea to the international community for economic, technical and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people to improve their living conditions and develop their relief infrastructure to allow them to live with the same dignity as other peoples of the world. I would also like to stress that concrete progress on the Syrian track and the Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese Shaba farmlands would constitute an important step towards establishing a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

**Vladimir V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation**

[Original: Russian]
*(Unofficial translation)*

[Addressed to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine
Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian
Authority, Mahmoud Abbas]

I am glad to send to you and to all Palestinians sincere greetings on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

This year the International Day becomes very symbolic, because now the goal of creating the independent Palestinian State, coexisting with Israel in peace and security, is as near as it ever was. So, it is important now to prevent the forces of extremism and radicalism from destroying the possibility for normalization of ties and resumption of the peace process on the basis of the “road map”, which emerged after the Israeli departure from Gaza and part of the West Bank.

We intend henceforward to assist actively in reaching the comprehensive and durable settlement in the region, which takes into consideration legal rights in interests of all people of the Middle East. Russia will always support friendly Palestinian people. We confirm our readiness to help the Palestinian National Authority in establishing its statehood, strengthening of power structures and solving the socio-economic problems.

Allow me to wish you, distinguished Mr. Abbas, strong health and happiness and to the Palestinian people – well-being and prosperity.

**Mahinda Rajapakse, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic**
**of Sri Lanka**

[Original: English]

Sri Lanka has consistently advocated for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and extended our firm and unequivocal support to their just struggle in obtaining their rights, including the right to statehood.

In my public life of over 30 years, I have associated myself with the cause of Palestine and supported activities in my country and elsewhere, aimed at promoting the rights and freedoms for the Palestinian people.

The reports of the continued hardships and deprivations suffered by the Palestinians almost on a daily basis fill me with profound sorrow. While expressing my concern on such incidents, I sincerely hope that the efforts to pursue an end to violence and take forward the peace process would soon bring successful results.
On behalf of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our continuing solidarity with the Palestinian people, and share their hopes and aspirations of seeing an end to foreign occupation, realizing a Palestinian State and a durable peace.

**Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan**

[Original: Arabic]

*In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate*

It gives us pleasure on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to reaffirm the support of the people and Government of the Sudan for the heroic Palestinian people in their just struggle for the realization of their legitimate aspirations for the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

We also affirm our support for the efforts of the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian people led by brother Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to unify Palestinian ranks and continue their stalwart defence of the rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions.

We condemn the unprecedented escalation of the Israeli machinery of oppression that persists in its aggression against the Palestinian people. We renew our call to the international community to take immediate measures to compel Israel to cease its criminal aggression, withdraw from all occupied Palestinian and Arab lands in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, cease building settlements, remove the racist separation wall and make
reparation for all damages it has caused in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

**Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand**

[Original: English]

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand, I have the honour to join the international community on this commemorative occasion in expressing our solidarity with the Palestinian people in the prolonged struggle for their inalienable rights. The International Day of Solidarity gives us an opportunity to express our concern over the plight of the Palestinian people and the great hardship they have long undergone. The question of Palestine still awaits resolution and our determination to work together towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is indeed needed.

Thailand opposes the use of violence, rejects all forms of terrorism, and remains committed to cooperating with the international community in bringing about their eradication. Thailand believes that a political approach through peaceful negotiations would attain a lasting resolution to the question of Palestine. Thailand also attaches great importance to the Quartet’s road map with the aim of achieving two States, living side by side with secure and recognized borders.

In this connection, Thailand fully supports the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and wishes them great success in their path towards a Palestinian State and lasting peace in the region.

**Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, President of Tunisia**

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Tunisia pays proud tribute to the struggle of this brotherly people for the restoration of their legitimate rights so that they might live in freedom, peace and security.

In keeping with our steadfast support for just causes, Tunisia reaffirms its strong support for the Palestinian cause and its complete solidarity with the Palestinian people in their effort to regain their dignity and inalienable national rights, and establish an independent State.

Tunisia follows with appreciation all initiatives aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem, and applauds the commitment of the Palestinian leadership to the choice for peace. It hopes that these initiatives and efforts will achieve the desired peaceful settlement.

On this occasion, Tunisia calls on the United Nations and all influential parties, above all the Quartet, to continue efforts to reactivate the peace process on the basis of relevant international resolutions and the road map, and to encourage Israel to be more responsive to and cooperative with international efforts to establish principles that will ensure the realization of peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

In harmony with its firm commitment to peace as a strategic choice, Tunisia regards the recent positive developments in the Gaza Strip as a step in the right direction, and hopes that they will constitute the beginning of a complete Israeli withdrawal from remaining occupied Palestinian lands that will provide a chance for coexistence among all the peoples of the region in security and stability.

In this context, Tunisia greatly appreciates efforts by the United Nations, and in particular by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to establish those rights and put them into effect on the ground, and renews its commitment to support those efforts on all levels.

**Ahmet Necdet Sezer, President of Turkey**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to reaffirm the support of the Turkish nation for the just cause and legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

For the attainment of the long awaited peace, serenity and stability in the Middle East, it is, first and foremost essential that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be settled and the Palestinian people be granted their inalienable rights. We support the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in this regard.

With the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, an opportunity has emerged to revitalize the peace process within the framework of the road map. To seize this opportunity and to maintain the existing momentum, it is a fundamental requirement that the parties should exercise constraint against the provocations of the radicals and refrain from unilateral moves that might undermine the fledgling mutual trust between them. It is important to remain committed to the vision of two States living side by side in security within recognized borders in the framework of the United Nations resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

In this context, during this delicate period, the international community, beyond offering the necessary political support, must provide substantial assistance for the Palestinian reforms that will shape the administrative and institutional structure of the prospective Palestinian State, and for the betterment of the Palestinian people’s living conditions as well as for the recovery of the Palestinian economy.

Turkey, in 2005, provided concrete support to the Palestinian National Authority with a view to contributing to the Palestinian security reforms. Furthermore, the training programs initiated for the Palestinian police organization will be continued in the period ahead. The Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency’s Ramallah branch was activated last May.

Turkish private sector and the civil society institutions have also started to take steps to strengthen the dialogue and consolidate the trust between the parties. In this framework, the Ankara Forum, initiated by the Turkish Union of Chambers of Commerce and Commodity Exchanges with the participation of the Israeli and Palestinian business circles in last April, has been bringing the parties together through economic and commercial cooperation schemes. It is now working on the project for the revitalization of the Erez Industrial Zone, which once realized, will provide immense contributions to the Palestinian development.

Turkey is determined to proceed with her material, moral and political support to her Palestinian brothers, for helping overcome the dire conditions that they are facing.

In the light of your Committee’s invaluable work, while reiterating our support to the just cause of Palestine and our determination to continue our solidarity with the Palestinian people, I would like to extend, on behalf of the Turkish nation and on my own behalf my sincere wishes for the well-being and prosperity of the Palestinian people.

**Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates**

[Original: Arabic]

*Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of God*

On behalf of the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to convey to you and the distinguished members of the Committee our utmost gratitude and appreciation for your noble efforts to expand the international community’s awareness of the dimensions of the Palestinian issue.

The determination of the United Nations to set aside this day each year to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people reflects the support of the international community for the progress made by this brotherly people in the past 50 years in their just and noble struggle for freedom, independence, and the legitimate right to determine their destiny, like all the other peoples of the world, and establish an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

In spite of great Arab, international and regional efforts during the past five decades to achieve a just settlement of this issue, historically one of the oldest on the United Nations agenda, the international community unfortunately continues to witness the daily procession of vicious military operations and attacks carried out by the Israeli armed forces against the Palestinian people and their national institutions. These operations are a form of aggression and abhorrent systematic State terrorism that cannot be justified under any pretext.

We welcome the Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which we consider an auspicious first legal step for the Palestinians that must be complemented by a total and genuine withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian lands occupied since 1967. But we are disturbed that, since completing its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Israeli Government has expanded construction of the separation wall deep within Palestinian lands, continued its settlement activity by annexing more lands belonging to cities and towns in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and embarked on new settlement projects. This reveals Israel’s true intention of reinforcing its illegitimate occupation of these lands and imposing a situation on the ground by force of arms, and obstructs the establishment of a viable Palestinian State in the region. We consider it a blatant violation of the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, internationally recognized resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. It also constitutes a dangerous threat to the road map, the efforts of the Quartet and other international endeavours to restore security, peace and stability to the Middle East as a whole.

We stress that the continued complacency of the Security Council and its influential members in the face of Israel’s aggressive policies, delaying tactics and failure so far to be bound by its commitments under the road map and internationally recognized resolutions has contributed greatly to an increase in desperation and a sense of oppression, frustration and radicalism among Palestinians owing to daily deprivation, oppression, humiliation, and degradation in their occupied homeland. The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns Israel’s continued policy of occupation in the West Bank and Jerusalem and its disgraceful violation of the Palestinians’ most basic inalienable human and sovereign rights to their cities and property. It demands that the international community, in particular the United Nations and the other members of the Quartet involved in this issue, shoulder its moral, political and legal responsibilities by moving immediately and decisively to provide necessary protection to the Palestinians. The international community must prevail on the Israeli Government to dismantle the separation wall in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and withdraw from all Palestinian lands occupied since 1967 in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions.

We stress that the achievement of security, peace and stability and the implementation of naturalization, coexistence, and economic development cooperation among the States of the region, including Israel, cannot happen as long as the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands continues. We believe that only compliance with the commitments contained in the road map and the Arab peace initiative, which calls for justice, an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, can
guarantee the security sought by all and create a climate in the region conducive to an axis of Arab-Israeli peace and understanding.

Finally, on the occasion of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its steadfast commitment to support the Palestinian people in regaining all their legitimate rights like the other peoples of the world. It appeals to the international community to increase humanitarian, economic, development and political assistance to the Palestinian people and its national authority to enable them to achieve freedom and independence, a chance for a dignified life and economic, social and security institutions and structures in an age marked by the spread of freedom, independence and human rights.

**Tran Duc Luong, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam**

[Original: English*)*

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to extend to you, and through you to the Palestinian people, our warmest congratulations and greetings of solidarity.

Viet Nam has consistently supported the Palestinian people’s just cause for their inalienable right. Viet Nam is of the view that the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which the Palestinian question is the nucleus, can only be solved through peaceful negotiations aimed at a comprehensive and fair solution on the basis of respecting the legitimate interests of all concerned parties, especially the basic rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish a State of Palestine in their homeland. In this spirit, Viet Nam welcomes the removal by Israel of the Jewish settlements from Gaza Strip and hopes that this first step will lead to Israel’s withdrawal from all other occupied Palestinian territories. Viet Nam supports all regional and international effort aimed at promoting the Middle East peace process and calls upon all the parties directly involved in the peace process to step up efforts and cooperation for an early revitalization of the implementation of the road map, thus contributing to peace and stability in the region.

On this occasion, Viet Nam reaffirms its strong support for the just cause and basic rights of the Palestinian people. We firmly believe that the struggle of the Palestinian people with the support of the international community will achieve full victory.

**Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic of Yemen**

[Original: Arabic]

It gives me great pleasure first to convey to this international gathering the utmost gratitude and appreciation for its efforts to preserve peace, security and legitimate international protection around the world. Each year on this day the world rallies in solidarity behind a people deprived of their rights and stripped of their land who look forward to establishing an independent State and living in peace in accordance with internationally recognized demands. This is a laudable international tradition that has its origins in the decisions of your Committee, which was behind General Assembly resolution 32/40 of 2 December 1977, calling for solidarity with the Palestinian people, assistance to them in attaining their usurped rights, and the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

As we stand here in solidarity within this international edifice, we reaffirm the Republic of Yemen’s support for the Palestinian people and their struggle for self-determination, the establishment of an independent State and the return of their displaced to their homeland and homes.

This gathering of yours is no less than an affirmation of the victory of justice and international legitimacy over the murder and displacement suffered by this people, who have undergone occupation, siege, destruction and racial segregation at the hands of the Israeli Government; many have been crowded into prisons. It is imperative that the international community be true to its resolutions demanding respect for internationally recognized demands for the establishment of Palestinian rights and an end to the injustice and aggression perpetrated by Israeli forces in the despicable form of collective punishment against women, children, the elderly and property with an arrogance unknown in human history.

This year’s observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes amid encouraging signs for the creation of a Palestinian State. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip was the result of the Palestinian people’s struggle as well as United Nations and the international community’s support for the hoped-for peace in the region. The Republic of Yemen sees in this step a preliminary indication that must be followed by other steps and measures to end the siege, stem the tide of murder against this people and stop settlement activity. While the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip might give rise to optimism about resuming the peace process, it should not blind us to the Israeli army’s systematic murder and destruction of the Palestinian people in the wake of the withdrawal, or the inhumane living conditions of the Palestinians under siege. Greater pressure from the international community is needed to force the Israeli Government to comply with international law, implement signed conventions and international resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and security coming from this organization, and respect human rights.

We appeal to all States with influence, whether in the Security Council or the General Assembly, and above all to the super-Powers and the European Union, to support the fledgling Palestinian State, provide it with means of protection and development and hasten the completion of further measures. These should include freeing prisoners, lifting the siege of Palestinian areas, ending the construction of the racist separation wall, dismantling the Israeli settlements in the rest of Palestinian territory and finally ending the tyrannical aggression against the Palestinian people.

We renew our call to the international community to play its role in ensuring that the necessary steps of the peace process are carried out in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions calling for a Palestinian State whose sovereignty extends to all its territory as stipulated by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) calling on Israel to withdraw from Arab lands occupied after 5 June 1967. Such steps must be based on respect for relevant international conventions and treaties, including the road map with its anticipation of the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Republic of Yemen salutes the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their heroic struggle to attain their rights and determine their destiny, and appeals to the international community through the General Assembly and the Security Council to carry out its role in protecting the rights of this people. It is the neglect and deferral of these rights that lies behind all the violence and terrorism that the world suffers from today, because deceit and a sense of injustice fuel these terrorist acts and provide justifications and pretexts for terrorist movements and groups to target international security and stability.

With confidence in the enduring justice and resolve of this international institution throughout the long stages of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we reaffirm our complete support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority in their struggle to regain their usurped rights, return to their homes and establish their independent State.

**B. Messages from Governments**

**Madagascar**

[Original: French]

On 29 November 2005, the international community will celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Beyond its ritual nature, this celebration reflects the genuine and profound desire of peoples and nations around the world to demonstrate their commitment to helping the Palestinian people realize their right to self-determination.

The United Nations, through the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, represents in that regard a powerful symbol that embodies the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has troubled to the international community for decades, as it represents a constant threat to international peace and security. Various initiatives have been undertaken with a view to finding lasting solutions to the conflict between the two peoples.

The road map drawn up by the Quartet and endorsed by the Security Council provides, and remains, the ideal framework for reaching a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the creation of two economically viable democratic States living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders.

So as not to jeopardize the chances of peace, Madagascar appeals to the responsibility of the two parties to join in the international community’s efforts towards ending the hostilities and strengthening confidence measures so that dialogue can continue.

We continue to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The international community has yet to take up a number of challenges: one of them is finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

May this day of commemoration give renewed impetus to the realization of the Palestinian people’s legitimate aspirations.

**South Africa**

[Original: English]

On behalf of the people of South Africa, I extend warm greetings to all Palestinians and to the Palestinian leadership on this occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

As we come together tonight to commemorate this important event, another year has passed, and the Palestinian people continue to stand out as peoples denied the right to belong to a country of their own. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is allowed to continue, it will render the Middle East region entirely volatile, and a threat to peace in the region is a threat to world peace. With the increase in global instability, the world remains preoccupied with the threat of global terrorism while the Palestinians continue to deal with almost daily incidents of extrajudicial killings and other forms of collective punishment.

The South African Government believes that Israel, as the stronger party, has a responsibility and an obligation to work together with Palestine in order to create the conditions for the resolution and prevention of conflict in the region. In this vein, the South African Government has called on the Security Council to accept that we are not dealing with two parties of equal strength and equal control over their respective populations. In this context, it has stated that “The Government of Israel makes formal decisions regarding the use of disproportionate force against people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and should be held accountable for its actions. The Palestinian Authority has been deliberately and systematically weakened by Israel It should therefore come as no surprise that in these dire conditions extremism has taken root amongst a small
sector of the Palestinian population.” To this end, the Government has called on the United Nations and the international community to act decisively to create the conditions in which the vision of a two-State solution can be realized; as the continued Israeli occupation, destruction of infrastructure, collective punishment and extrajudicial assassinations make the achievement of peace hard to reach.

South Africa has called on all parties to the conflict in Israel and Palestine to demonstrate responsibility in avoiding actions that could add to an already volatile situation. We stand firm in our belief that no cause can justify resorting to terror against innocent civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli. Acts of terror cannot deliver the much cherished peace and security that are sought by Palestinians and Israelis alike. The South African Government has previously pointed out the futility of these acts of violence, which inevitably lead to acts of retribution and retaliation, fuelling the never-ending cycle of violence. The South African experience has demonstrated that political progress is the most effective tool to marginalize those opposed to peace. Peace can only be achieved through a negotiated settlement that provides for a sovereign Palestinian State and guarantees the right of Israel to live within secure borders.

It is our Government’s view that by sharing the South African experience in negotiations, peacemaking and transition to democracy and by supporting the strengthening of the peace camps in Palestine and Israel as well as helping the general dynamic towards peace, we can present a supportive initiative to the process. To this end, an active programme of support has been undertaken under the auspices of the Presidential Peace Initiative.

Reconciliation and justice have featured prominently as some of South Africa’s key priorities, and has been central to the process of nation building in our country. It is therefore understandable that the South African Government takes a principled stance with regard to the tensions in the region. South Africa has, however, remained consistent in its approach and owing to our own experiences of negotiating a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, has credibility with those Israelis and Palestinians who are genuinely committed to forging their own peace agreement.

South Africa’s clear position of support for the Palestinian cause is based on principles with universal validity and cannot therefore be made out to be partisan in the context of this specific conflict. In as far as South Africa’s role is concerned, South Africa supports the process and not one or another of the parties to the conflict. South Africa’s involvement in the Middle East peace process is based on universally recognized ethical values and not on the promotion of self-interest.

The South African Government has been one of the strongest voices in calling for the immediate implementation of the “road map”, without preconditions. The Government accepts that the path to the implementation of the road map may be long and difficult. The South African Government is of the opinion that real progress will necessitate compliance by both parties with obligations as outlined in the road map, without any preconditions, as non-compliance with the expected obligations only serves to contradict the international community’s efforts to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The South African Government furthermore remains focused on developments relating to Israel’s construction of the separation wall. Closely linked to this issue is Israel’s continued expansion of settlements, which is illegal and in direct contravention of Israel’s obligations as set out in the road map. The separation wall can therefore not be called a security wall, but is rather a wall that acts to enforce occupation, separating hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their families, homes, lands, and religious sites. The South African Government is of the opinion that the wall will not bring security to Israel, but may instead render the two-State solution obsolete. To this end, South Africa’s presentation of a written legal position, as well as our participation in the proceedings before the International Court of Justice is a logical consequence of our principled position in respect of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, namely that all efforts to resolve this matter through negotiations must be supported.

The South African Government is of the opinion that Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza presents a unique opportunity to revive peace efforts and that the momentum created by this move should be sustained with the assistance of the international community. The removal of all Israeli settlers from Gaza is an unprecedented historic move, setting the stage for lasting peace in the region.

Whilst the disengagement plan is a positive development, the success of Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza will be dependent largely on the Palestinian people’s legitimate right to be in control of their own destiny and territory, including its borders, its coastline, its airspace, its water sources and the free movement of its people. Sustainable peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians will only be achieved once Israel has withdrawn from all of the occupied Palestinian territories and a sovereign State of Palestine has been established.

The South African Government is furthermore committed to assisting the Palestinian people in the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections called for 25 January 2006, by providing election monitors under the auspices of the Independent Electoral Commission. The international community must work together to ensure that the Palestinian elections are free and fair and that freedom of movement and campaigning is guaranteed by the State of Israel. In this vein, the Government and people of South Africa will continue to lend a hand in working with the peoples and leadership of the region as well as the international community in the development of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in the Middle East.

It is imperative that the South Africa Government pursue all avenues, to raise within the international community, the question of establishing a genuinely independent Palestinian State, constituted on the basis of a territorially contiguous area on the lines of the June 1967 borders. There can be no security for Israel, for the Palestinians or lasting regional peace whilst the Palestinians’ inalienable right to self-determination remains unfulfilled. To this end, there is a need to establish a sovereign Palestinian State, with its capital in East Jerusalem, alongside the State of Israel, both existing within secure borders. This is the consistently expressed South African vision for the basis of a just, lasting and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace.

It is hoped that, by commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, this act will focus world attention on promoting support for international peace efforts, the aim to stop the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, salvage the political process and realize the vision of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians based on the creation of an Israeli and Palestinian state, living side-by-side within secure borders.

In spite of the depressing conditions in Palestine, South Africa continues to hope, together with those who have the courage to seek a negotiated solution, that the coming year would bring Palestinians closer to a better future.

**C. Messages from Ministers for Foreign Affairs**

**Rafael Antonio Bielsa, Minister for Foreign Affairs,**
**International Trade and Worship of Argentina**

[Original: Spanish]

The Argentine Government once again reaffirms its full solidarity with the Palestinian people by joining in this significant commemoration.

It offers us a suitable opportunity to reiterate our conviction that a lasting solution to the Middle East conflict can only be achieved through an agreement between the parties that guarantees both the Palestinian people’s inalienable right of self-determination within its own territory and the Israeli people’s right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders.

In the present context, our country considers that the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank should accelerate the implementation of the road map and relaunch the peace process.

As some time has elapsed since the completion of that withdrawal, we note with concern that the parties have not adopted a cooperative agenda that would enable them to overcome their differences regarding the measures needed to improve the economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, the application of the Sharm el-Sheikh accords and the implementation of the road map.

We continue to consider this to be a unique opportunity that should not be missed. At the same time, we are aware that violence may endanger what has been achieved, with the concomitant risk that the Middle East agenda will again be dictated by those who do not have a real interest in the establishment of a lasting peace. The actions of some groups must not trigger destruction and mutual denial, at the cost of understanding and cooperation.

We therefore urge the parties to undertake to contribute to the restoration of all the conditions needed to resume peace talks within the framework of the commitments made by them and the decisions of the United Nations, in particular the Madrid and Oslo agreements and other agreements in force between the parties, as well as resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) of the United Nations Security Council and the principle of land for peace.

The Government of the Argentine Republic continues to support firmly the work being taken forward by the Quartet. It reiterates that the implementation of the road map continues to be the appropriate mechanism for the progress of talks and invites the parties to comply with the obligations laid down therein. The road map, as was noted by the Quartet in its statement of 20 September last, requires both parties to take in parallel simultaneous and mutually reinforcing measures.

My country has joined the appeals of the international community as expressed by the General Assembly of the United Nations to halt construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to dismantle it. We have taken note of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, in which the Court concludes that the building of the wall violates international law, and we hope that steps will be taken to remove it.

As we have already said, the Israeli withdrawal from the settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank should usher in fresh hopes for a just and peaceful solution to this conflict. It should be noted again however that any initiative must be consistent with the road map and that the parties should not take unilateral actions when they might prejudice issues that can only be settled though negotiations and agreements between them.

The people and Government of the Argentine Republic firmly support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and trust that both parties will return to the negotiating table so as to be able to translate into reality the hope that two States, Palestine and Israel, may finally live together in a climate of peace and mutual understanding.

**Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic**
**of Azerbaijan**

[Original: English]

I have the honour, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to reaffirm its unswerving support to the Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Azerbaijan continues to encourage and support every international effort aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly.

Azerbaijan also reiterates its support for the Palestinian people in their quest for the restoration of all their inalienable rights, particularly their right to establish an independent and sovereign State. We believe that the Palestinian Authority under its current leadership will be able to realize this goal.

**Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic**
**of Belarus**

[Original: English]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am honoured to extend sincere assurance of friendship and solidarity from the people and Government of the Republic of Belarus to the people of Palestine.

Being a long-standing member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Republic of Belarus is a convinced advocate of a peaceful and equitable solution of the Middle East conflict and full and comprehensive exercise of the rights of the Palestinian people.

We believe that the international community and, in particular, the United Nations play a vital role in bringing closer the day when peace and stability will be settled in the land of Palestine.

I avail myself of this opportunity to commend your dedicated and skilful guidance of the Committee’s activity.

**Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan**

[Original: Japanese]
*(Unofficial translation)*

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I am convinced that the peace and stability in the Middle East cannot be achieved without progress in the peace process. It is important to move the Middle East peace process further forward in order to realize a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. I support a resolution of the Palestinian issue through the realization of the peaceful coexistence of the two States of Israel and Palestine. In order to ensure progress on the road map, I will provide continuing support for the Palestinian people, play a positive political role and further support the peace efforts of both parties.

The election of the Palestinian Legislative Council is scheduled to be held next January. I hope that it will be conducted in a fair and free manner, as was the election for the presidency of the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority last January.

Japan, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council since January, will continue to be active in addressing the issue of the Middle East peace process, which has a significant impact on international peace and security.

**Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania**

[Original: English]

I avail myself of this opportunity to extend to you my warm congratulations on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Romania has been and will continue to be a staunch supporter of the two States solution, based on the principles of the road map, as the way to achieve a genuine and lasting peace in the Middle East. We hope that the aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent State, existing in good neighbourliness with all the countries of the region will soon be realized.

**Farouk Al-Shara’, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic**

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People it gives us great pleasure once again to express our utmost appreciation for the role that your distinguished Committee plays in organizing this important international meeting each year. It serves to remind the international community that there is a people who continue to suffer oppression and violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities without any restraint on their increasingly violent and cruel terrorism.

We greatly appreciate your sincere efforts to stand with the Palestinian people through more than 50 years of wanton Israeli occupation of Arab lands. But we also ask ourselves on this occasion how many martyrs - women, children and the elderly - have fallen over the past year, how many houses have been demolished over the heads of their owners, and what has the international community done in the face of a terrorism that in its barbarism and arrogance destroys everything in its path, even trees?

Israel tries to cover up its crimes with specious pretexts, claiming that they are in “self-defence” and therefore do not warrant condemnation, and it enjoys the support of certain parties. The Security Council has issued over 40 resolutions and the General Assembly over 600, all demanding that Israel withdraw from occupied Arab lands in order for a comprehensive and just peace to be established in the region. But Israel continues to reject these resolutions and to impose a policy of fait accompli by stepping up settlement in the occupied lands and building the racist separation wall in total disregard of internationally recognized resolutions.

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza has merely changed it from a small prison to a large prison. This withdrawal came as a result of steadfast resistance. For all its expertise in brutality and terrorism, Israel has not been able to force the Palestinian people or the residents of the occupied Syrian Golan to give up on their right to self- determination on all of their national soil.

Syria has declared at numerous international forums that the way to achieve peace and escape the cycle of violence and bloodshed lies in ending the Israeli occupation of all lands occupied since June 1967 through negotiation towards a durable, comprehensive and just peace by implementing internationally recognized resolutions, above all Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (l973), the Madrid principles, and the Arab peace initiative endorsed by the Beirut Summit of 2002.

We call on the international community to act in earnest to shoulder its responsibilities to the Palestinian people who suffer from brutal treatment and systematic terrorism by the Israeli occupation forces in violation of all international conventions and norms and in total disregard for the many resolutions issued by the United Nations.

We greatly appreciate your distinguished Committee and urge you to continue your support of the Palestinian people in their struggle for the liberation of their land, the restoration of their rights and the return of all Palestinian refugees to their motherland, so that the Middle East and the world might enjoy the blessings of a comprehensive and just peace.

**Borys Tarasyuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine**

[Original: English]

Allow me to extend my sincere greetings to the people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

As one of the founders of the United Nations, Ukraine has always attached great importance to the Palestinian issue. We fully recognize the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for justice, freedom and dignity, as well as their inalienable right for self-determination and statehood.

The completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank paves the way to renew efforts on the Quartet’s road map. This historic decision represents an important step towards achieving the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and opens a new chapter on the path to peace in the region.

We believe that the United Nations should continue to maintain its permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in conformity with the relevant resolutions.

Ukraine will continue to support the efforts of the international community aimed at advancing the peace process and the establishment of lasting stability in the Middle East.

**D. Messages from intergovernmental organizations having received a standing invitation**
**to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly**
**and maintaining permanent offices at Headquarters**

**European Union**

[Original: English]

The acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this message.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the European Union would like to reiterate its firm commitment to the self-determination of the Palestinian people as well as to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The European Union reiterates its appeal to both sides to take all possible political, security, economic and social measures to bring about a resumption of negotiations on the basis of the road map presented to the parties on 30 April 2003. There is no other means of achieving a just and lasting settlement which satisfies the legitimate expectations of the peoples of the region, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the principles adopted at the Madrid Conference - in particular the principle of land for peace - and the Oslo accords and subsequent agreements. The European Union confirms its commitment to the self-determination of the Palestinian people through the establishment of a viable, sovereign, peaceful and democratic State for Palestinians that will guarantee Israelis the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

The European Union welcomes the holding of multi-party elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council foreseen for 25 January 2006. The European Union underlines that free and fair elections are an indispensable step in the process of consolidating democratic institutions. The European Union stands ready to assist the Palestinian Authority.

The European Union welcomed the recent Agreement on access issues relating to Gaza reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority as a major breakthrough. These issues are fundamental to improving the humanitarian situation in Gaza and essential for promoting peaceful economic development. The priority now is to ensure that the commitments made in it are translated into reality. The European Union is ready to undertake the Third Party role described in the Agreement. The European Union will monitor the operations of the Rafah border crossing point and provide assistance to reinforce Palestinian border management capacities. The European Union will continue to provide assistance to support the excellent work of Quartet Special Envoy James Wolfensohn. Capacity-building, through training, equipment and technical assistance, is being taken forward through the European Community's assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The European Union reiterates its willingness to support the peace process in close cooperation with the other partners in the Quartet.

The European Union also confirms its commitment to continue its technical and economic aid for the Palestinian people and to contribute to the strengthening of Palestinian institutions representing a peaceful and democratic State governed by the rule of law.

**Organization of the Islamic Conference: Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General**

[Original: Arabic]

The twenty-ninth of November of each year offers an opportunity for the international community to reiterate its solidarity with the Palestinian people, in implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution No. 32/40 of 2 December 1977, and as an expression of its commitment to supporting the Palestinian people's just struggle for the recovery of all their inalienable rights.

I am pleased on this occasion to express the deep appreciation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and its Member States, for the role played by the United Nations and its various organs and committees in expounding the Palestinian cause, and for its consistent support to the Palestinian people in their just struggle for the recovery of their national inalienable rights. Special mention here must be made of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes this year at a time when the Palestinian issue has witnessed significant developments involving the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the evacuation of the settlers from that area as well as from a number of settlements in the northern part of the occupied West Bank. This withdrawal has been welcomed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which also called for other steps to follow, such as to lead to confidence building and to set the stage for a new peace process founded on the resolutions of the international legitimacy and the road map and leading to ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories which started in 1967, so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights, notably their right to freedom and to the establishment of their own independent State with East Jerusalem as their capital. This will lay the proper groundwork for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

After the Israeli withdrawal, new hopes had begun to take seed for the achievement of a détente in the peace process. However, Israel's persistence in its aggressive practices and hostile measures against the Palestinian people, and its insistence on proceeding with the construction and expansion of settlements has led to a real backslide and significant receding of hopes in the resumption of the peace negotiations, which stresses the need for an actual and effective international intervention in order to impress upon Israel to honour its commitments as stipulated in the road map and in the agreements signed with the Palestinian side, and to compel it to respect international law and resolutions.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People comes this year at a time when Israel is still continuing with its escalating aggressions against the defenceless Palestinian people. These aggressions have thus far claimed the lives of more than 4,000 Palestinians and severely injured tens of thousands of them, not to mention the thousands of Palestinian dozens who are languishing in Israeli prisons under abominable conditions which defy the most fundamental human rights and violate international laws and conventions. This is further compounded by Israel’s daily violations of international standards and agreements, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War. Israel is indeed carrying out a policy of mass reprisal and of deliberate killings, outside the bonds of legality, against activists and Palestinian civilian and political leaders, a crime further aggravated by the demolition of houses of Palestinians, bulldozing their farms, confiscating their lands and establishing illegal settlements thereon. Israel has also regularly imposed tight blockades on the border crossings, thus strictly confining the movement of Palestinians, gutting the fabric of the Palestinian territories with hundreds of military barriers which isolate cities and villages and even districts of the same town. This is further compounded with Israel's continued construction of the separation wall, a segregationist barrier that isolates hundreds of Palestinian villages, swallows thousands of hectares of Palestinian lands, and creates new realities that would stand in the way of the establishment of the future Palestinian State. Furthermore, Israel is threatening to obstruct the legislative elections and prevent their holding in their set dates, and is attempting to interfere blatantly in these elections which should be, in fact, a purely internal Palestinian affair.

In addition to all these violations, the Israeli occupation forces are carrying out a policy of racial discrimination against the occupied city of Al-Quds/Jerusalem sealing it off with thousands of military barriers and ditches which prevent the worshippers from reaching their mosques and churches which themselves have not been spared daily violation, desecration and intervention in their affairs. Israel has recently escalated its aggression against the holy places by authorizing the Jewish radicals, through a Supreme Court order, to enter the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and perform rituals there, a matter which is bound to stir feelings and lead to further escalation and bloodshed. Likewise, Israel is attempting to impose a fait accompli by intervening in the. religious affairs of Palestinian Muslims and Christians, and by attempting to hinder the restoration of Al-Aqsa Mosque whose walls have been cracked during the Israeli excavation works which we have for so long urged against.

The Israeli aggressions have had devastating effects on the Palestinian economy and brought it to the brink of a total collapse as a result of the destruction of the infrastructural damage, movement restrictions and mass reprisals. These Israeli practices have caused losses to the Palestinian economy, since the start of the intifada, estimated at over 15 billion dollars.

The world which has recently had new hopes for the resumption of the peace process following the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, needs today to exert every effort to put an end to the Israeli practices and measures against the Palestinian people and to force Israel to honour the signed agreements, abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy, and free the way for the Palestinian elections. The OIC Secretary-General commends the laudable efforts recently made by the United States Secretary of State in order to ensure that an agreement is reached on Palestinians’ free movement and crossings.

In this connection, the Organization of the Islamic Conference wishes to express, once again, its support for the efforts of the Quartet to ensure the implementation of the road map, the discontinuation of the Israeli aggression and occupation, the forward progress towards the establishment of the independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It is our belief that the success of any peace plan hinges upon the existence of a fixed time schedule and a binding mechanism for the implementation of its provisions, through a control and supervision system which embodies the international community’s will.

On this occasion, we, at the Organization of the Islamic Conference, wish to reiterate that the way to reverse the deterioration that is currently racking the region, as a result of the relentless Israeli aggression, is to ensure that:

1. Israel ends its aggression, lifts the siege it has imposed on the Palestinian people, facilitates the process of the Palestinian elections taking place under the Palestinian Authority, and allows all Palestinians, including the inhabitants of Al-Quds/Jerusalem to exercise their electoral right;

2. The peace process is resumed in accordance with the provisions of the road map and on the basis of the Madrid Peace Conference and resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and the principle of land for peace;

3. The building of the racial separation wall is discontinued, along with the removal of that part of it has already been erected, the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Palestinian territories up to the 4 June 1967 borderlines including the occupied city of Jerusalem, the ending of the Israeli settlers’ presence on the Palestinian territories, and the abandoning of all settlement plans as representing a flagrant violation of international law and international legitimacy resolutions;

4. A fair solution to the refugee problem is achieved on the basis of international resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III), in such a way as to guarantee their return to their towns, villages and properties;

5. The Palestinian people are enabled to exercise their right to establish their own independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State with Al-Quds/Jerusalem as its capital;

6. A reversal is effected of all resolutions and measures that conflict with the resolutions of international legitimacy, regarding the occupied city of Al-Quds/Jerusalem, and any designs to truncate Palestinian authority over the Holy
City as the capital of the Palestinian State.

The success of the international efforts to resolve the Middle East problem and the Palestine issue is fully dependent on achieving the above steps, without which the international attempts can bear no fruit, and no peace or stability will be achieved. The international community is called upon to reiterate and renew, on this occasion, its solidarity with the Palestinian people, and to step up its efforts to put an end to Israeli aggression and ensure the return of the peace process to the standards and principles on the basis of which it was initiated.

In closing, I wish to reiterate to the Palestinian people the full solidarity of the Islamic Ummah, with its national authority in favour of putting anend to the Israeli aggression and ensuring the recovery of the Palestinian people’s inalienable national rights, including their right to return, to freedom, to self-determination, and to the establishment of their own independent State on their national soil with Al-Quds/Jerusalem as its capital.

**E. Message from a non-governmental organization**

**Caritas Internationalis**

[Original: English]

In partnership with the global community in its annual expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people, the Caritas network of 162 member organizations working in 200 countries and territories worldwide supports the United Nations-hosted international day of observance on 29 November.

Based on our own Caritas campaign that “Peace is Possible” in the Holy Land, we stand in solidarity with all peace-seeking people of good will who recognize and publicly support the basic and inalienable rights of the Palestinian community. We stand in solidarity with all Muslims, Jews and Christians who sacrifice and work together to build up, restore and heal the deep wounds that still scar this Middle East society.

We call on our respective Governments to pursue every path leading to peace, supporting the “road map for peace in the Middle East”, which was initiated and sustained by the members of the Quartet (the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation). We acknowledge the efforts made by the Quartet, but offer our global solidarity to press for greater practical realizations of a just and lasting peace for all.

Resolutions and international agreements have chronicled painfully slow progress. We implore all interested and responsible parties to seize every opportunity to demonstrate to the world that it is not too late. Only comprehensive political will can capitalize on the human and financial investments for peace that humanitarian organizations, development programmes, inter-religious initiatives, and academic and community groups have contributed towards a better life for Palestinians and Israelis.

The memories of tragic loss and social fragmentation have long scarred several generations. No peace negotiation or statement of balanced concerns can ever hope to heal these deep wounds. A steadfast commitment to building diverse partnerships for peace is essential. We need to be fully engaged, spreading global solidarity amongst all parties and encouraging Palestinians and Israelis to think differently about the days ahead. Otherwise, the barriers, settlements, occupation, land seizures, violence, extremism, political machinations and age-old prejudices will continue to punish innocent people, further distancing them from their God-given rights to life, freedom, protection, civil society, and human dignity. Countless Palestinians and Israelis are daily giving their lives to release the land and all its inhabitants from this unnatural captivity. We must accompany them as they bravely face the fears that separate our fragile human family.

Peace is possible. It is not too late. Every voice counts and makes a difference.