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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT  
BY**

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**ON  
“RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION”**

**THIRD COMMITTEE  
UNITED NATIONS  
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**Check against delivery**

Chairperson,

I thank you for providing my delegation with an opportunity to address the Third Committee on item 71: Right of Peoples to Self-determination.

The principle of self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, affirm the right of all peoples to self-determination and the obligation by all States Parties to promote the realization of this right.

Therefore, South Africa finds it most unfortunate that the international community still has to grapple with the subject of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people long after its enunciation by the UN General Assembly. We view with deep concern the continued occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel in contravention of International Law.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Prof. John Dugard, in his report A/62/275 addresses the key issue regarding the situation of Palestine, which is the right to self-determination of the Palestinian People. The report catalogues a litany of violations visited upon Palestinian people, the root cause of which is their wish to exercise their right to self-determination in an independent and sovereign State.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains concerned about the continued volatile situation and the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories, particularly in Gaza, as aggravated by the severe restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement, through multiple Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints. The building of the illegal settlements and the negative impact of the illegal separation wall on the daily lives of the Palestinian People continues unabated, despite the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and in spite of international condemnation.

The South African delegation is also concerned with the illegal imprisonment and arbitrary detention of Palestinians, including the imprisonment of women and children. Thousands of Palestinian political prisoners continue to languish in Israeli jails, where they are subjected to inhumane treatment leading to widespread suffering, trauma and death. This is clearly a violation of human rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Another concern for my delegation is the fact that the Quartet has taken a selective approach to negotiations. This approach only serves to undermine the unity of the Palestinian people and to hamper the establishment of a meaningful, long lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, which must inter-alia lead to the creation of a Palestinian State. Furthermore, we are concerned with the fact that the Quartet has ignored the human rights situation in Palestine and also not given due consideration to the pronouncements of the larger membership of the United Nations. We therefore believe that the United Nations, as a member of the Quartet, should begin to articulate and represent the will of the majority of the International

Community and play a more effective role towards ensuring the self-determination of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

In addition, South Africa calls on both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Only a political solution, through a negotiated settlement, based on a two-State solution can guarantee a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This vision of a two-State solution has already been enshrined in the Security Council resolution 1397 of 2002. We cannot allow this vision to fade.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate our position on the Middle East Peace Process i.e. the establishment of an independent state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel, with both States enjoying secure and internationally recognised borders.

The Palestinian people's right to self-determination must be respected by the international community, and the denial thereof resulting from foreign occupation, cannot be allowed to continue. We have a duty to fulfil the obligations enunciated in the UN Charter and the International Bill of Rights.

South Africa therefore wishes to reiterate its unwavering support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to realise their right to self-determination and exercise their sovereignty in their own State, Palestine.

I thank you.