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**Remarks by
Ms. Kyung-wha Kang
United Nations Deputy High Commissioner
for Human Rights**

**Item 1
Urgent Debate**

14th session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva, 1 June 2010

Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I convey and echo the High Commissioner's profound regrets over the loss of life and injuries that resulted from the Israeli attack against the humanitarian convoy carrying aid to Gaza. As she emphasized yesterday before this Council, and in her statement delivered to the press, we are shocked that humanitarian aid would be met with such violence, and we unequivocally condemn what appears to be a disproportionate use of force.

While details regarding the incident are still emerging, we take note that the operation against the flotilla occurred in international waters. In light of the tragic outcome, it seems apparent that the Israeli military was highly excessive in its use of force, and we must question why force should have been used at all in such a situation.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner stressed the need for a full investigation into this incident. The Security Council, meeting in an emergency session that concluded this morning, issued a statement that calls for an investigation. In this context, allow me to emphasize that any investigation must meet relevant international standards. It must be prompt, impartial, credible and independent.

Excellencies,

The 1.5 million persons of Gaza – more than half of whom are children, continue to suffer under a blockade that is an affront to human dignity. While the blockade undermines the full range of human rights on a daily basis, it has had a devastating impact, in particular, on the rights to health, water, food, shelter, work and education.

In her most recent report to the Council on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, the High Commissioner recommended that Israel immediately lift the blockade of Gaza. Had the Government of Israel accepted this recommendation, we would not be expressing our condemnation and regret over needless deaths and injuries.

Let me, therefore, reiterate the High Commissioner's call for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza, so that the deteriorating human rights crisis can be fully addressed with the urgency that the situation requires.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This tragic incident is one more in a series of actions that have moved the Human Rights Council to act in order to ensure accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law. Allow me to express, on behalf of the High Commissioner, the hope that the Israeli Government will take the necessary decisive actions to demonstrate to the international community a clear commitment to abide by international law.

I wish you a productive session.

Thank you.