65th General Assembly

Statement by Israeli Representative

Question of Palestine

November 30, 2010

ISRAEL: Mr. President, what is most striking about today's debate is not its one-sidedness nor its rote condemnations of Israel that are divorced from facts on the ground, nor the fact that the biased resolutions before us reflect nothing more than the negative political dynamics that exist in the United Nations. Instead, what really stands out this afternoon is how little today's debate accomplishes in assisting the Palestinian people to realize peace, pursue prosperity and enjoy self-determination in the context of a two-state solution.

As we have seen year after year, today's debate offers shallow support for its stated purpose. For it is clear that serious, direct negotiations are the fundamental road to security and prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Instead of working to bring the parties together in meaningful negotiations and preparing the Palestinians to make the tough choices that will be required to reach an agreement, this distinguished forum engages in the same ritual condemnation of Israel, feeding Palestinian notions of victimhood.

I say to my colleagues this evening, let us turn away from the destructive rhetoric that continues to characterize this day and begin a new discussion that provides meaningful support for the Palestinian people. Mr. President, the modern state of Israel has made clear from its inception that we believe it is both necessary and possible to live in peace with our neighbors. This is solemnly emphasized in our Declaration of Independence and has been proven through our historic peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and our commitment to this principle remains steadfast as we continue to pursue peace in the region.

But it takes two to tango. Israel cannot reach this peace on its own. We can only achieve peace with the Palestinians through compromise and direct, bilateral negotiations. We can only move forward through bilateral negotiations that address the concerns of both sides. Mr. President, any peace agreement must be based on the fundamental principles of mutual recognition and security. After generations of denying the Jewish people historic connection to the land of Israel, the Palestinians must unambiguously abandon their quest to make this land their homeland alone, both now and in the future.

Unfortunately there are still questions as to whether the notion of living side by side with the Jewish state has been fully accepted by the Palestinian people. For example, in a recent poll, almost two-thirds of Palestinians expressed the hope that eventually a single Palestinian state would emerge in the region even if they supported a two-state solution in the short-term. To establish lasting peace, the Palestinian leadership must be clear about their ultimate aims. They must recognize Israel as the Jewish state for the Jewish people and turn away from messages of hatred and delegitimization in favor of educating further generations about peace and coexistence.

Mr. President, any peace agreement must also clearly address Israel's legitimate security concerns, which stem from the difficult reality facing our citizens on the ground. Practically every day the Israel civilian population is exposed to the serious threat of rockets and terror attacks from Palestinian militants, which are supported by the Iranian and Syrian regimes with training, financing and arms.

Let me mention in this regard that after Israel dismantled all its settlements in the Gaza Strip, it received terrorism and rocket fire on its towns and communities in return. Thousands of rockets have been launched from the Hamas-controlled areas since 2001, the majority of which since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Weapons continue to be transferred to terrorist organizations in Gaza daily.

Any future agreement must address these security threats. To this end, the international community must confront without ambiguity those member states that provide extensive support for the enemies of peace in our region. In particular, we must address the Islamic Republic of Iran, which continues to export violence, hatred and instability in the Middle East and beyond.

Mr. President, my country has continued to show throughout this last year that it is willing to take bold measures to pursue peace. Israel has helped to encourage impressive growth in the Palestinian economy and removed hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, we relaxed the restrictions imposed on the passage of civilian goods into the area and expanded the inflow of materials available for projects under the supervision of international organizations, which provide humanitarian assistance for a Palestinian population that remains hostage to a hostile terrorist entity.

Given the opportunities before us, I feel compelled to once again call on the Palestinians and our other Arab neighbors to join Israel in making real compromises and taking courageous action to bring peace in our region. As such, we are hopeful that the Palestinian Authority will rejoin Israel without preconditions in the direct peace negotiations that were broken off two months ago. It is clear that real dialogue around the negotiating table and not the tired diatribe that has characterized this forum is the only path to peace for our two peoples. However, establishing peace is not a one-way, but a two-way street. Compromises on both sides will be necessary for meaningful negotiations.

Mr. President, the General Assembly has a clear choice to make. It can continue to adopt the same distorted narrative about Israel in pursuit of a politicized agenda that does nothing to further the stated purpose of today's debate or it can take a more constructive approach and work to bring the parties together to pursue peace, recognizing that this is the fundamental way to support the rights of the Palestinian people. Thank you.