65th General Assembly

Statement by Syrian Representative

Question of Palestine

Consideration of draft resolutions

November 30, 2010

SYRIA: Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, may I join my colleague, the Distinguished Representative of Egypt, who spoke on behalf of the Nonaligned Movement. I would like to thank him for having introduced the two draft resolutions on Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan.

Mr. President, how long will the General Assembly continue to consider the item, “The Situation in the Middle East?” The General Assembly began its consideration of this item in 1970 at its 25th session. It has considered it every year since without making any tangible progress in finding a settlement. How long will the General Assembly at each and every session call on Israel, the occupying power, to put an end to its occupation of the Arab territories?

Stating that any measure taken by Israel in the Occupied Arab Territories to impose its jurisdiction there, in the Syrian Golan and in the other territories, that all such measures have absolutely no legality, and they are null and void. Is it not now high time for the General Assembly to play the part it is given in the Charter, namely to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security? After the Security Council failed to ensure implementation of its resolutions, which were adopted unanimously, including the resolution of 1980 on occupied Jerusalem and the 1981 resolution on occupied Syrian Golan, those were two resolutions that rejected the decision by the occupying Israeli authorities to annex Jerusalem and the occupied Golan, and it determined that those decisions were null and void.

Is the international community not aware now that Israel is flouting international law and humanitarian and ethical principles? Over 1,000 resolutions have been adopted by the United Nations and its various agencies and committees over the last 40 years. And today, once again, we find ourselves considering this same item on the situation in the Middle East. It’s a very, very dangerous moment, and the chance of war seems to be trumping the chance for peace because there has been increasing Israeli aggression, and there has been unprecedented level of settlement construction.

Most recently, last month, Israel decided to build more than 1,300 housing units in East Jerusalem with a view to undermining all Arab, regional and worldwide hopes for achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. This is at a time when the entire world is working to achieve that peace, declaring that peace is an absolute prerequisite for having peace and stability in the region.

And now the world is absolutely shocked and horrified at what Israel is doing. Israel continues with its practices of belligerency. It continues with its settlement construction, and it is profaning the holy places. It has imposed a blockade on Gaza, and it’s threatening to evict thousands and thousands of Palestinians from their land. This is discriminatory racism based on archaic ideologies that call for religious and ethnic cleansing in order to give life to a mirage of Israeli Judaism.

Israel is continuing these practices. It has built the separation wall, the racist separation wall, and it is moving ahead with Judaization of Jerusalem. It is also taking racist decisions, the most recent one related to the Jewish loyalty oath to be taken by non-Jews. All of this reflects the racism of Israel. This is the exact antithesis of all the calls to respect for international law. These are calls that are made by the international community, and the world has rejected the view that Israel is an oasis of democracy in the Middle East.

Mr. President, Syria and the Arab states have taken up the cause of peace. They believe that peace is a strategic option. They adopted the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002 at the Arab Summit in Beirut. And this goes along with everything that peace implies -- recuperation of the land, the withdrawal from Israel -- by Israel from all Occupied Arab Territories back to the borders of 4 June 1967, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the resolution adopted in 1948.

Now, what has been the Israeli response to this Arabic peace initiative? Arab -- Israel’s response has been to simply ignore the appeals. It went into the West Bank in 2002. There was the Jenin massacre, and Israel has continued its expansionist settlement policies. It has seized more territory. Israel, not content with what it is already doing, it increased its aggression against Lebanon in 2006, and then in 2008 there were thousands of wounded and dead among the Palestinians when it went into Gaza.

Mr. President, the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan is part and parcel of its policy, this very dark picture. Israel is refusing to return the Occupied Syrian Golan to the motherland of Syria. It is refusing to comply with international legality, particularly resolution 487 of 1981 -- 497, excuse me. And just a few days ago, Israel promulgated a law, organization of a referendum before withdrawal from Syrian Golan and occupied East Jerusalem. This relates to territories where it has no right to take decisions. This is a violation of international law and a rebuff to the will of the international community, which has accepted that Jerusalem and Syrian Golan are occupied territories. The community has decreed that the Israeli decisions on annexing those two places is null and void.

The Israelis’ positions have been rejected. One cannot change the truth. The Syrian Golan is occupied Syrian territory. This is nonnegotiable, and the land must be returned up to the border of 4 June 1967. This is a prerequisite to peace.

There are some who still have illusions. There are some who still believe that Israel is truly seeking peace, and Israel is given gifts because of that belief. But Israel continues with repression of Syrian citizens. It has imprisoned citizens of the Golan. It has seized land. It has built more settlements. It has pillaged the resources. It has twisted and trampled on the history and archaeological sites, and mines have been placed there. There is also the question of the Israeli theft of water, and this led to considerable losses, up to $20 million in losses.

Mr. President, from this rostrum I would like to reconfirm that Syria has a sovereign right to the Occupied Syrian Golan up to the border of 4 June 1967. This is not negotiable. This is not subject to bartering. Peace must be based on our claim. We would like to reconfirm that Syria requires this before peace can be achieved. This is not simply a concession we are calling on Israel to make, which would be a painful one. It is, purely and simply, the matter of a right that has been taken away and that must now be returned. We in Syria and in the Arab countries in general are truly committed to a just and lasting peace as a strategic option, with all that that implies -- complete restitution of rights and the return of occupied territory.

However, we cannot close our eyes to the realities and legitimate questions about the future. It would be inadmissible for us as Arabs to continue to produce evidence of our true desire for peace when Israel is the party that is occupying the territories. Israel is the party that is committing aggression against our peoples. It is Israel that is threatening to unleash war and constantly threatens this. And so we would like to ask the following question: A state based on illegal occupation and the murder of citizens, a state that has committed massacres in Lebanon and in Gaza and in other parts, a state whose terrorism has engulfed several regions, can such a state act in support of peace? A state whose successive governments have prevented us from reaching a settlement within the context of the peace process, can such a state be a full partner in the peace process, particularly when the head of that state is one of the most extremist governments in the history of that country?

And then, what is the most important question to be asked here, and this is a question we need an answer to, how long will Israel place itself above the law? How long will Israel continue to act with impunity, continuing with its aggressive practices and persevering in that path? We believe that today more than ever, the international community must take real concrete measures to deal with what Israel is doing so as to lead it to put an end to its aggressive practices, to end its settlement construction, to lift the blockade on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and to put an end to its occupation of Occupied Arab Territories back to the border of 4 June 1967? Thank you.