65th General Assembly

Statement by Swiss Representative

Situation in the Middle East/Question of Palestine

November 30, 2010

SWITZERLAND: Mr. President, Switzerland wishes to speak on the following items, the peace process. The continuation of settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem violates international law and undermines the peace negotiations. We call once more upon Israel to immediately cease all illegal activities and to comply with its international obligations. It is imperative that negotiations be promptly resumed to give priority to finding mutually acceptable arrangements on borders and security. The Geneva initiative offers solutions in these two areas which fully respect the interest of Israel and the future Palestinian state that we call for.

Two, inter-Palestinian reconciliation. The restoration of Palestinian unity is essential for the successful completion of the peace process and the reconstruction of Gaza. Switzerland calls on the parties concerned to redouble their efforts to rapidly reach a reconciliation agreement. The heart of this agreement must be the establishment of an electoral calendar.

Three, restrictions on movements of goods and people in the occupied Palestinian territory; the restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of people and goods in Gaza are clearly disproportionate to the military advantage sought and are, therefore, illegal. Other solutions exist to preserve Israel's security interests.

It is also imperative that economic and trade exchanges and the movement of people between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem be restored and that the private sector in Gaza be able to export to foreign markets. In this context, we note with interest the recent Israeli announcement that regular exports of goods from Gaza will be allowed soon.

All stakeholders must work to implement Security Council resolution 1860 as soon as possible. To help improve the situation, in June we proposed an access regime which meets both the needs of the civilian population in Gaza and the security needs of Israel. This regime can be adapted for access by sea.

To keep denying or tolerating this unacceptable policy of restrictions, whose negative effects in political, security and humanitarian terms are glaring is not a viable option. The continual deterioration of the situation in Gaza cannot but exacerbate the risk of escalating violence and of further serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Four, Lebanon -- finally, Switzerland wishes to express its concern over the rising tension in Lebanon. It believes that the interests of justice and stability can be harmonized and calls on the stakeholders to exercise restraint. Each victim has a right to justice. Impunity is not an option. The special tribunal for Lebanon contributes to this objective. It is, however, important to emphasize that the presumption of innocence applies to each defendant as long as he or she has not been found guilty. Thank you.