*Unofficial Transcript*

CUBA

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Mr. President, we thank the Secretary General for the presentation of the report, Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its similar report, both of which are to be found in docments A/66/367 and A/66/35 respectively.

In particular, we would like to thank Ambassador Salam Diallo of Senegal and Savior Borg of Malta for their presentations of the draft resolutions and the report of the committee.

This item was included for the first time on the General Assembly's agenda 64 years ago in 1947, most likely when the majority of the delegates present here today had not even been born. Since then, this organ has held similar debates on 39 occasions, while it has been unable to prevent Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people, nor has it been able to reverse Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory, including of East Jerusalem.

Forty-four years after these acts occurred in 1967, Israel, the occupying power, has defined the international community with its constant transgression of international norms and treaties, including a long list of resolutions adopted by this assembly and by the Security Council. Nor has it heeded the reiterated calls of the Secretary General of the United Nations and other leaders of international entities to put an end to its illegal actions and to its crimes against the Palestinian people.

Mr. President, the situation has continued its downward spiral since we last met to take up this question 12 months ago. The reports that the Secretary General and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People have submitted to us speak volumes in describing the worsening situation.

Israel has continued its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, contravening the Security Council resolutions, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the obligation that it is under pursuant to the roadmap.

Israel continued the illegal construction of a wall in the West Bank, including in occupied East Jerusalem and surrounding areas against the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. It has failed to fulfill its obligations under international law to provide protection to the civilian population living in the Gaza Strip.

Israel continues the murder and assault of Palestinians with the attacks and incursions carried out by the Israel army. The blockade of the Gaza Strip contributes to the worsening of the social indicators of the people living there, including of women and children. These are only a few of the facts that are reflected in the reports I reported previously and which underscore the gravity of these acts. There are ample reasons to adopt strong measures condemning these acts.

Political measures, such as those that are available to this assembly for adoption, as well as binding decisions on the part of the Security Council in order to halt Israel's crimes and to punish the perpetrators. Why does the Security Council remain so passive and inert in view of this overwhelming evidence? Why has it failed to punish these crimes perpetrated against the Palestinian people? Why does it not deprive the perpetrators of the economic resources they use in order to carry out their acts, and why has it failed to limit their movements?

Why does NATO show no concern for the constant flouting of the human rights of the Palestinian people, the outcome of Israel's aggression? This question reveals hypocrisy and the double standard applied by a number of developed countries that claim to champion human rights. The United States of America have prevented the Security Council from condemning Israel, which is very different to what happens in the situation of countries of the south that oppose and denounce its imperialist policies.

Mr. President, the Cuban people and government historically have upheld the cause of the Palestinian people. They have supported the exercise of their rights and have roundly condemned Israel's crimes. Our position remains unwavering. Thus, we support the establishment of a Palestinian state, which Cuba has recognized since it was first proclaimed based on the pre-1967 borders and with its capital in East Jerusalem.

In turn, we support the decision of our Palestinian brothers and sisters to request the inclusion of Palestine as a full-fledged member of the United Nations organization. We are therefore proud to have supported Palestine's admission as a member state -- a full member state of UNESCO.

Mr. President, today, once again, we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a tradition that has brought us together every 29 November since this assembly adopted resolution 32/40B in 1977. In the customary message for this occasion, the Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated my country's condemnation of these serious violations of international law perpetrated by Israel, which contravene the objectives of the peace process.

We have condemned the illegal construction of settlements, the demographic alteration of the population, as well as the imposition of arbitrary and racist restrictions on circulation throughout all of occupied Palestinian territory. The demolition of houses, the eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, as well as other acts of incitement, of provocation and illegal aggression carried out by the extremist settlers targeting the Palestinian population and sacred sites.

The Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the inaugural general debate during this session of the General Assembly, speaking on behalf of the Cuban people and government, and I quote. "If there is recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to independence, sovereignty and self-determination, if there is recognition of the need to reestablish the exercise of the human rights of Palestinians, if the blockade of Gaza, economic coercion and segregation, as symbolized by this infamous wall, are all recognized as crimes, if the subjugation of a nation under conditions that jeopardize its existence is described as genocide, if all member states are supposed to adopt all legal measures within their reach in order to protect Palestinian civilians, then the General Assembly must take action now.

Cuba, a country with a small Jewish community, condemns the historical injustice of anti-Semitism, the crime against humanity of the Holocaust, and recognizes also the right of the state of Israel to exist. Our people only harbor fraternal feelings towards the Israeli people who are also a victim of this conflict.

"The General Assembly has the undeniable moral, political and legal obligation to ensure the recognition of an independent Palestinian state within the boundaries established before 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital as a full member of the United Nations.

"This must be done with or without the approval of the Security Council, with or without the US veto, with or without new peace negotiations." Thank you very much.