



**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Chair of the Coordinating Bureau
of the Non-Aligned Movement**

**Before
The General Assembly**

Agenda Item (16)

“Question of Palestine”

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Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to address the General Assembly in this important occasion on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Today we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which represents a special opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its support for the legitimate endeavors of the Palestinians to restore and fully exercise their inalienable rights, foremost the right of establishing their independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Movement believes that the achievement of such lofty goal should be based on the two-State solution, the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace initiative.

Consequently, The Non-Aligned Movement calls for the early resumption of the peace process and regrets the lack of progress made, despite the international consensus on the urgent need for peace and the increased efforts by the international community to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Question of Palestine and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Regrettably, no progress has been made due to Israel's continued defiance to the United Nations resolutions and international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. The international community must not waver in its calls upon Israel to cease its violations and to return to negotiations in good faith.

Since the consideration of "the Question of Palestine" Agenda Item by the General Assembly in 2008, Israel "the Occupying Power" has not ceased its unlawful practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including its collective punishment of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and its illegal settlement activities in the West Bank. Moreover, Israel has used excessive and indiscriminate force against Palestinian civilians and committed grave breaches to the international humanitarian law and human rights law as described by the United Nations Fact Finding Mission to the Gaza Conflict, the United Nations Secretary General Board of Inquiry and the Independent Fact-Finding Mission of the Arab League of States. Such activities negatively impacted on the conducive environment needed to achieve the objective of peace and affected endeavors to resume negotiations and reach an agreement on the final status core issues.

Israel continue to impede efforts to resume peace negotiations by oppressing the Palestinian people, refusing to stop settlement activities and trying to impose unilateral solutions through creating new facts on the ground, aiming at altering the status and character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel do not refrain from measures that prejudice the outcome of negotiations on the final status issues – Jerusalem, settlements, the refugees, borders, security and water. Such illegal measures undermine confidence, inflame tensions on the ground, prevent any progress and raise questions about Israel's credibility as a partner for peace.

In the West Bank, Israel continue its illegal settlement activities, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, intensifying its confiscation of Palestinian land, expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, construction of the Wall and other destructive measures, including the demolition of more Palestinian homes, in an attempt to defacto annex more Palestinian territories. All of this is being done in grave breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, as well as Israel's commitments under the Road Map, which clearly calls Israel to freeze all settlement activities, including "natural growth" and to dismantle all settlements "outposts" established since March 2001. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement continues to express grave concerns and warns from the results of the ongoing Israeli policy on prospects to achieve the two-State solution and to establish a viable Palestinian State.

Further, the Non-Aligned Movement is alarmed regarding the latest illegal Israeli measures in the Occupied West Bank by approving the construction of 900 more new settlement-housing units in the settlement of "Gillo" south of East Jerusalem, in contradiction with the internationally supported objective of a peace process to resolve the conflict. Settlements activities undermine the possibility of realizing the two-State solution. The Non-Aligned Movement alerts the international community to the fact that Israeli settlement expansion in the Occupied East Jerusalem is accelerating in an unprecedented manner in conjunction with demolishing Palestinian homes and evicting and displacing hundreds of Palestinians families, in a flagrant and illegal attempt to alter the demographic composition, status and nature of the City and to pre-empt any final solution to the conflict.

Concerning the situation in the Occupied East Jerusalem, the Non-Aligned Movement expresses grave alarm and warns from the continued and persistent attacks by the extremist and militant Israeli settlers, protected by the Israeli forces, at the Islamic holy Sites of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa mosque. Such attacks against Palestinian worshipers represent a threat and provoke an already volatile situation in the occupied city. The Non-Aligned Movement expresses grave concern that, in defiance of the clear international consensus rejecting Israeli illegal colonization in the occupied East Jerusalem, Israel continues to construct settlements in the city and continues, inter alia, to demolish Palestinian homes, to evict Palestinian families from their homes, to confiscate their land and properties and to carry out excavations in the City, including in the vicinity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns Israel's continuing provocations and illegal actions against the City's holy sites and against its Palestinian inhabitants living under foreign occupation. Further, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its deploring of all Israeli actions and provocative measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, geographic nature, character and status of occupied East Jerusalem. The Non-Aligned Movement believes that time has come for the Security Council to pronounce itself and to take a clear position and serious actions regarding Israel's violations in the occupied East Jerusalem.

The situation in Gaza continues to be also a matter of grave concern for the Non-Aligned Movement. We have repeatedly stressed the fact that the current situation in Gaza is unacceptable, unsustainable and has negative repercussions on all efforts to advance the peace process. Through closing all its crossing points to Gaza, Israel continues to impose blockade on the Palestinian civilian population, deprive them from their humanitarian needs and prevent Gaza's reconstruction, in violation to international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 and the resolution of the 10th Emergency Special Session held on January 16, 2009. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel lift immediately its illegal blockade and allow for the immediate and sustained opening of all border crossings to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and to realize the urgent early recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the urgent need for reconstruction to begin in Gaza, including through the implementation of the Secretary General's proposal for the commencement of United Nations-led civilian reconstruction activities and the completion of numerous suspended projects managed by the United Nations Agencies working on the ground despite availability of funds. The Non-Aligned Movement regrets the continued obstruction of the import of essential re-construction materials into Gaza as a result of the ongoing Israeli blockade.

Mr. President,

The peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine requires rapid response and intensive efforts by the international community to rectify the unlawful current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and to commit Israel to comply with its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law. The Non-Aligned Movement believes that the respect of international law will bring about a real change in the situation and create the appropriate environment for pursuing the negotiation of a final,

just and lasting settlement that will bring the peace, stability and coexistence that our long-troubled region need and deserve.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls upon the Security Council to act hand in hand with the important role played by the General Assembly, to fulfill its permanent responsibility regarding the Question of Palestine until it is resolved through the establishment of the Palestinian State and the fulfillment of the two-State solution vision.

In conclusion, The Question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process is now in a crucial juncture. Fulfilling the vision of two-State solution, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security is the only way to settle the Question of Palestine and to restore peace in the region. The Non-Aligned Movement supports the achievement of the two-State solution and will continue to support the Palestinian people and its leadership in their endeavors to bring an end to the longstanding Israeli occupation that began in 1967 through a just and lasting peaceful solution, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions.

Thank you Mr. President,