

ISRAEL

The 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Second Committee

Statement by:

Ambassador Uzi Manor
Israel's Representative to the Second Committee

Agenda Item 40: Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People
Over Their Natural Resources

United Nations, New York
20 October 2006

Madam Chairperson,

Let me make it clear from the outset: Israel has a vested interest in improving the state of the Palestinian economy, for the benefit of both sides. Still, it is clear that progress is dependent, first and foremost, on a stable security situation as well as cooperation by the Palestinians and the international community. In this context, it is fitting that all parties act in a manner that will advance cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the economic sphere (the principle on which the Paris Protocol, which regulates the economic relations between Israel and the Palestinians in the interim period, was based) and not sacrifice important economic interests to political considerations.

As long as the Hamas government continues to pursue the policy of terror against Israeli citizens, to ignore the three benchmarks put to the Palestinian Authority by the international community, namely: to stop the violence, to recognize Israel and to accept and respect previous agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority – no economic cooperation could persist. Only an atmosphere of security and political stability can engender a strengthening of the Palestinian economy. A short reminder: only

a few years ago, the total Palestinian work force in Israel exceeded 150,000 individuals. Income from employment within Israel constituted a very significant part of the total income of the Palestinian labor force (30-45 percent). Unfortunately, this situation has changed drastically, due to the fact the PA has been turning a blind eye to acts of terrorism, releasing convicted terrorists from prison and allowing illegally armed militias to engage in armed violence against Israel with impunity.

May I remind here that on August 15, 2005, Israel began the implementation of the Disengagement from the Gaza Strip and four northern Samaria communities. The Disengagement from the Gaza Strip was completed on August 22 and from northern Samaria the next day. On September 12, 2005, IDF forces completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

Since the departure of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, there has been a dramatic increase in attempts to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Israel and to establish an infrastructure in Judea and Samaria by exploiting the unfenced Sinai-Negev border area. Hamas has been intensively involved in terrorist actions, also assisting other terrorist groups in carrying out attacks against Israel.

Israel has faced numerous attempted kidnappings and incessant Kassam rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip that have targeted civilians, schools and homes. As the Israeli Foreign Minister stated, "Israel fully withdrew from the Gaza Strip in order to create an opportunity to re-energize the peace process. In return, it has received a daily barrage of terrorist attacks from Gaza and a Palestinian Authority controlled by the Hamas terrorist organization".

This terrorist activity culminated in the infiltration and attack by terrorists in the area of Kibbutz Kerem Shalom in which two Israeli soldiers were killed and one abducted. The sole aim of the Israeli military operations since then has been to have the soldier returned and to prevent the continuation of terrorist attacks from Gaza against Israel and its citizens.

The above mentioned facts have been totally ignored by the one sided report which was submitted to us.

Madam Chairperson,

The report mentions the security fence several times, while deliberately and totally ignoring the reasons for its construction. What is the security fence? The security fence currently being built between the Palestinians in the West Bank and Israeli population

centers is a defensive measure. It is designed to prevent terrorists from carrying out attacks in Israel. The fence does not annex any territory to Israel, nor does it establish any borders. Its route was chosen in accordance with security and topographic considerations, while every effort has been made to minimize disruption to the daily lives of the local Palestinian population.

Let us not forget that since September 2000, a large majority of the Palestinian terrorist attacks, which took the lives of over 1000 Israelis, have emanated from the West Bank. Israel has been searching for ways to prevent the infiltration of terrorists and their weapons into its towns and cities. The decision to build a security fence was taken only after other options were tried but failed to stop the deadly terrorist attacks. The Palestinian claim that the security fence was established in a deliberate attempt to limit their rights is totally baseless. There would have been no need for a security fence had there not been an orchestrated campaign of terrorism targeting Israeli men, women and children. The only motivation for building the security fence is Israel's desire to protect innocent lives.

Concerning the fence and water issues, let me emphasize that:

* 96% of water wells in the West Bank are on the eastern side of

the fence and are not affected by it in any way.

*Twenty-two wells (4%) are located west of the fence and are continuously in operation.

In several locations, the route crossed existing water infrastructures. In all such locations, alternative infrastructures were installed by Israel and continuity of supply maintained.

Madam Chairperson,

Reference has been made to "...restrictions on the movement of goods and persons...physical obstacles including checkpoints, military observation towers and gates..." etc. No wonder this one-sided report deliberately and totally ignores the background to the above-mentioned security measures that have been taken by Israel.

Israel has made every effort to mitigate the hardships of the general Palestinian population. Although some circles have criticized Israel for the economic impact of its security measures, the wave of continued terrorist attacks demonstrates that Israel's security concerns are real and the imperative need to separate Israelis and Palestinians is fully justified.

The Palestinian Government's fostering of a culture of ongoing armed confrontation and its blatant disregard for the economic

welfare of its own population has created the setting for the continued escalation of terrorism and violence.

In this reality, Israel must take the appropriate and necessary steps to provide its citizens with security, and it would be unrealistic to expect Israel to do otherwise.

A reference has been also made to the border crossings. Let me remind you that:

On 5 January 2005, a terrorist infiltrated the Erez crossing on the border of the Gaza Strip, activated an explosive device, hurled grenades and opened fire. The Islamic Jihad and the El-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 13 January 2005, shortly before the closing of the Karni crossing, terrorists activated an explosive device on the Palestinian side of the crossing, blowing a hole in the door through which Palestinian terrorists infiltrated the Israeli side and opened fire at Israeli citizens. Six Israeli civilians were killed. Hamas and the Fatah/El-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed joint responsibility for the attack.

On 26 April 2006, a Popular Resistance Committees cell in the Gaza Strip was on its way to carry out a bombing attack at the Karni goods crossing. The plan apparently was to infiltrate the

crossing and detonate explosives along the barrier, creating an opening for gunmen to cross over to the Israeli side, where they were to open fire on Israeli civilians and security personnel operating the crossing.

The attempted bombing at Karni was the realization of a long series of attempts to carry out an attack at the crossing. Despite the fact that the Karni goods crossing serves as the main conduit of commodities and consumer goods for the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip – and perhaps in light of this fact – the Karni crossing has been a preferred target for attacks by terror organizations over the course of the past few years.

The Erez and Karni crossings, and others like them, were built in order to enable the free and constant flow of people and goods between the Gaza Strip and Israel. They were constructed in order to increase the economic cooperation between us – not to be used as a gateway to terrorist infiltrations, terrorist attacks against Israelis, or an easy way to smuggle weapons and explosives into Israeli territory.

The only reason why these crossings and others are sometimes closed is to prevent terrorist organizations from perpetrating acts of terror against the Israeli population. Following intelligence alerts of impending attacks, the Karni crossing and others have been intermittently closed over the past months. Hamas has repeatedly

declared its commitment to the well-being of the Palestinian people and, as of January 2006, has become officially responsible for the Palestinian population. It is in fact this very organization that stands behind a longstanding plan to attack the largest goods crossing in Gaza, and it is therefore directly and fully responsible for the hardships stemming from the closing of the crossings.

Madam Chairperson,

As to the Palestinian people and the Millennium Development Goals: Let us recall that in September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a series of time-bound and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environment degradation and discrimination against women. They are now called the MDG's – the Millennium Development Goals.

There is no doubt that Israel would like to see the Palestinians, its neighbors, achieve these MDG's. Furthermore, Israel has been collaborating with other countries and international organizations in order to assist the Palestinians in this regard, sharing its vast experience and also providing financial support.

However, it is vital to stress again that no positive development in this direction can be achieved in the Palestinian Territories or

elsewhere without the existence of the basic condition of peace and goodwill by all those concerned. Terrorism is not consistent with this condition. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2) clearly recognizes the principle of resolution of disputes by peaceful means. Terrorism is not consistent with this principle, either.

Terrorist attacks can never be justified and they are particularly tragic when the disputed issues could have been settled through negotiations. The greatest obstacle to peace, economic development in the Palestinian Territories and the achieving of the MDG's there is Palestinian terrorism.

Thank you