



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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Statement By
The Honourable Abdul Rahim Bakri
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On Agenda Item 40: Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources at the Second Committee Of The 61st Session of The United Nations General Assembly, New York Friday, 20 October 2006

Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary General and the UN Economic Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the report submitted under this agenda item contained in document A/61/67.

2. In doing so however, we note that the report was also submitted to ECOSOC for its substantive session held in July this year, and that the report itself is dated 3 May 2006. As such, some of the information could have been outdated since then. Further, the report failed to capture the latest developments that have occurred in these areas, most notably Hamas' victory in the July Legislative Council elections. This development, a free expression of the political rights of the Palestinian people, resulted in the cessation of aid and assistance from the developed world, which in turn has exacerbated the already critical situation in Palestine. It is Malaysia's hope however, that the formation of a National Unity government will lead to an overall improvement in the economic and social conditions in Palestine.

3. In addition, the report also did not reflect the untold sufferings experienced by the Palestinian people since the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip, which began on 25 June 2006 and which goes on to this day. Despite the shortcomings of the report, a reading of it will lead to the following conclusions:

- 3.1 Firstly, the occupation of Palestinian territory, characterized by arbitrary detention, the closure system and the systemic use of disproportionate force, has deepened the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian people;
- 3.2 Secondly, the closure system, the most heinous form of collective punishment is the main cause of poverty, currently afflicting 62 percent of Palestinians, as well as the deepening humanitarian crisis in Palestine; and
- 3.3 Thirdly, Israel continues to confiscate Palestinian land and water resources, in contravention of the Geneva Conventions and other international laws and norms as a means of subjugating the Palestinian people and to alter the facts on the ground in the Palestinian territory.

4. While the present situation in Palestine is extremely dire, Malaysia is equally concerned about the long-term economic and social situation there, including the issue of the long-term sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their resources. The illegal construction of the barrier has made the subsistence untenable, due in large part to the confiscation of Palestinian lands and incremental eviction orders, for which no compensation is paid. Further, the construction of the barrier has resulted in the severe restriction of movement, thus affecting employment and job-creation efforts.

5. At the same time, illegal and expanding Israeli settlements continue to consume a disproportionately large amount of resources. This reflects the general situation in which Israel and its settlements consume 83 percent of the West Bank's aquifers. In terms of the environment, at least 14 settlements drain liquid waste into Palestinian lands.

6. In terms of economic performance, while the Palestinian grew by 6 percent in 2005, it should be noted that it has expanded from a very low base. Indeed, the report estimates that the current GDP is approximately 25 percent smaller that it was in 1999. In addition, demographic growth, which was higher than GDP growth, has contributed to a fall in GDP per capita, and is also swelling the number of the unemployed.

Madam Chairperson,

7. The issue of the permanent sovereignty of Palestine over its resources, as is the case with the broader Middle Eastern issue generally, cannot be resolved in the absence of a comprehensive solution. Towards this end, Malaysia has called for the United Nations to convene an international conference on the Middle East to deliberate on comprehensive, just and durable peace plan, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

8. For Malaysia, support for the plight and cause of the Palestinians has been deep and abiding. Malaysia in our own small way has endeavoured to ease the plight of the Palestinian people. As an indication of this commitment, Malaysia has contributed financially to supplement the budget of the 16 Palestinian governorates amounting to US\$16 million.

9. Malaysia's support for the Palestinian cause is similarly reflected at the political level as well. For example, following the Israeli offensive in Gaza, Malaysia as Chairman of the OIC Summit Conference convened a special meeting of the Extended Executive of the OIC on 3 August 2006 in Putrajaya. The meeting adopted the Putrajaya Declaration on the Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which called for among others:

- 9.1 One, the immediate and unconditional release of all Palestinian detainees held by Israel;

- 9.2 Two, the total, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem;
- 9.3 Three, the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities to compel Israel to respect international law and put an end to its illegitimate practices in the territories; and
- 9.4 Four, the international community to respect the outcome of the Palestinian elections of January 2006 and be supportive of Palestinians in exercising their rights.

10. In conclusion, I would like to state that there can be no general peace in the world if the situation in the Middle East remains unresolved. The international community, particularly its most powerful members have a responsibility to act as a catalyst and neutral broker in these efforts. Malaysia stands ready to play its part.

Thank you.