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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**TO THE
TENTH EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION ON THE
ILLEGAL ISRAELI ACTIONS IN OCCUPIED
EAST JERUSALEM AND THE REST OF THE
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK
17 NOVEMBER 2006**

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Madame President,

My delegation wishes to associate itself and support the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Madame President,

The South African Government is deeply concerned at the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. The recent attacks in Gaza are clearly raising tensions in the region to new dangerous heights at a time when all sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be looking at ways to end the negotiation deadlock and move the peace process forward.

The increase in violence is threatening regional and international peace and security and we urge the General Assembly to act decisively and take action to resolve this conflict urgently. The draft resolution before us helps us meet this responsibility.

My delegation reiterates its position that no party should take unilateral actions that seek to predetermine issues that can only be resolved through negotiation. We call on the Israeli Government to refrain from this type of action and, as a major military power in the region, to act with restraint to avoid further civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure. We respect a country's right to protect itself, but there can be no justification for the over excessive actions of the Israeli government.

Equally, we call on the Palestinians, to stop firing rockets into Israel. The only lesson that we have been able to learn from these retaliatory actions over the past decades is that they merely give rise to more violence.

Madame President,

The United Nations has been seized with this matter for more than 40 years. Its failure to find a lasting solution to this crisis is a failure to give hope to the people of Palestine. If we fail to give people hope, people in the region will believe that they have no other recourse but to engage in more violence and counter violence. It is of concern that every time there is progress in forming a Government of National Unity (GNU) in Palestine, Israel intensifies its aggression, endangering the progress made. We urge the Palestinian people not to be diverted from their objectives of forming a GNU by these provocative actions. In that regard the international community must accept its responsibility and reignite the peace process.

In conclusion, Madame President, we wish to reiterate our unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with Israel with both States enjoying secure and internationally recognised borders. This vision of a two State solution, as enshrined in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), and the principle of land for peace must therefore underpin any permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict.

I thank you.