



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ERTUĞRUL APAKAN
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**AT THE 64. SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON AGENDA ITEM: "THE
SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST"**

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Mr. President,

Turkey has aligned itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the distinguished representative of Sweden on behalf of the European Union, under the agenda item "the Question of Palestine". Therefore my remarks will be brief.

Mr. President,

Today, in the Middle East, we are confronted with many challenges.

Although they differ in nature, all these challenges are somewhat related to or ensuing from the fact that we have no functioning peace process in place.

We have to address this issue immediately and reactivate the peace process in all its tracks.

It is a must for a peaceful future in the region and we are duty bound for future generations.

To achieve this, we need to remove the obstacles on the way to peace.

In this respect, the most prominent impediment is the continuing Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, particularly in East Jerusalem.

Israeli practices related to housing as well as the evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes are illegal and unacceptable.

We call on Israel to meet in full its road map commitments and to cease all settlement activities not partially and temporarily, but completely and permanently.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the core issues of the peace process along with borders and refugees and subject to final status negotiations.

In the meantime, Jerusalem is a city held sacred by three monotheistic religions. Any unilateral act on the nature of Jerusalem can easily have much broader ramifications.

Therefore, we reemphasize the importance of preserving the status as well as cultural and religious fabric of Jerusalem and call on Israel to refrain from any provocative action in the city.

In view of the preparing the ground for an early resumption of the negotiations, we should also continue to uphold the basic framework for peace as embodied in relevant Security Council resolutions, Madrid Principles, Arab Peace Initiative and the road map obligations.

There is a general convergence on these fundamental parameters: A comprehensive peace based on two states – Israel and an independent, democratic and viable

Palestinian State – living side by side, agreed borders based on those of 1967, Jerusalem as the capital for both states, a just settlement for refugees.

At the current stage, the reaffirmation of this broad end result should help us working on how to reach it.

We have always been aiming for a comprehensive peace since all issues are intertwined in the Middle East. Therefore, Syrian and Lebanese tracks require our attention too. For the resumption of the Syrian – Israeli track, both of the parties should display the necessary will to make progress.

Mr. President,

It is all the more difficult to move ahead on the path of peace when there is an ongoing tragedy in the region. The wounds opened by the Israeli operation to Gaza early this year are far from being healed and in fact, still bleeding.

As the winter sets in, the dismal living conditions of the Palestinians in Gaza starkly manifest themselves. The full implementation of the resolution 1860 and the opening of the crossings is a must for putting an end to the persisting unbearable situation in which Gaza's 1.5 million Palestinians are living.

As long as there is no return to normal daily lives and socio-economic activity in Gaza, building confidence and ensuring stability in the region would remain elusive.

Mr. President,

At the current stage, the empowerment of the Palestinians is increasingly important. We need to support Palestinian state-building. Prime Minister Fayyad's two year plan in preparation of the Palestinian statehood is very encouraging and requires our backing. We are also determined to maintain our support and cooperation in this field.

Mr. President,

Turkey will continue to make every effort on the way to a comprehensive and permanent peace in the Middle East.

As we go through, yet again, a critical period in the Middle East, there is no alternative but to reactivate the peace process and carry forward with determination.

We have to work harder.

Otherwise, another failed attempt would just sow more despair and anger in a region already drowning in both.

Thank you, Mr. President.