

Statement delivered by the President of the Security Council

Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to United Nations

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

November 24th, 2008

Mr. President,

I would like to convey to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, my sincere gratitude for the invitation to address this solemn meeting, in my capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November.

We are gathering on this day, as we have done since 1978, to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This year the international community is witnessing a series of constructive efforts and initiatives undertaken by relevant actors in the region and beyond, which the Security Council strongly hopes will advance the process towards the achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions and with the Charter of United Nations.

The annual observance of this day as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provides an opportunity to reaffirm the Security Council's role in supporting the parties in their efforts to realize the two-State solution with the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living in peace and security alongside Israel.

The Council, of course, remains seized of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and continues to receive monthly briefings on the situation from the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the Department of Political Affairs and to hold debates on the situation. While some progress has been made in the peace process in the past year since the Annapolis Conference and the resumption of direct, bilateral negotiations between the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, the situation on the ground remains of serious concern to the Council.

Mr. President,

To make progress in the peace process, and improve the situation of the Palestinian people on the ground, the Security Council reiterates that the parties must avoid actions that undermine confidence and could prejudice the outcome of negotiations.

At the same time, I would like to highlight the efforts by the Palestinian Authority to reform the security sector and the cooperation between the two sides in this regard, taking as an example the progress made in the security in the case of the city of Jenin and the recent deployment of Palestinian security services in Hebron. The Security Council hopes for continued cooperation in order to extend such progress to other major Palestinian population centers.

The Council underlines in particular the importance of the Paris Conference of December 2007 in mobilizing donors and investors to provide financial and political support for the Palestinian Authority. In this regard, the Council also stresses the importance of the Bethlehem and Berlin conferences held in 2008.

Mr. President,

Regarding the seriousness of the humanitarian situation affecting the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, the Security Council remains profoundly concerned by the rapid decline of socio-economic conditions, as stated by different United Nations agencies and programs on the ground. We continue to support all steps that have been taken to provide the necessary emergency and humanitarian assistance to relieve the suffering of Palestinian people, and call for their implementation without obstruction.

Since the earlier part of this year, we have seen a reduction in the level of violence on the ground, mainly as a result of the period of calm that began in June, and in this regard we recognize the efforts of Egypt in facilitating this understanding among the parties. We hope this period of calm will continue, despite recent incidents of violence. I would like to stress that for the Security Council both parties need to exercise utmost restraint and refrain from any measures that can destabilize the fragile situation and incite a deadly escalation of violence, including attacks on Palestinian and Israeli territory.

The Security Council welcomes the briefing by the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to the Quartet on November 9, during which they re-affirmed their commitment to ongoing, bilateral negotiations to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without any exception, as specified in previous agreements. The parties also re-affirmed a number of mutual understandings on the principles governing their negotiations and requested the continued support of the international community. We also note the Quartet statement earlier this month on the possibility of holding an international meeting in Moscow next year, after further consultations with the parties, as an important step toward reaching an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal in the near future.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Security Council support to existing initiatives aimed at achieving the two-state solution of Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the 1967 borders and reaffirm the importance in this regard of relevant Security Council resolutions. The Council recognizes the role of the Quartet, as well as the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative issued by the League of Arab States as a key regional element of this peace process, and encourages continued active efforts in this regard.

I would like to assure the Committee of the commitment of the Security Council in supporting and contributing to the advancement of all efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the region and its intention to work closely with the parties in the important period ahead, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thank you Mr. President.