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Statement by
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Of
The Syrian Arab Republic

At
The General Debate

Of the
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**Mr. Ali Al-Treiki,
President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly,**

Allow me to congratulate the fraternal Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and you personally on your election as president of this Session. I wish you success in your endeavors, and succeed you will, given your vast experience and competence. I also extend to your predecessor Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann our appreciation for successfully steering the work of the 63rd session and would like to particularly recognize his positive stand vis-à-vis the issues with which the international community was seized. I wish the Secretary General of the United Nations success in his undertakings as he seeks to carry out the purposes and objectives of our international organization.

We come here every year and stress from this very rostrum— as do others - that the Middle East is among the most tension ridden regions of the world and that the situation is ominous. From this very rostrum, most speakers stress that a just and comprehensive peace is an urgent requirement for the realization of the interests of all parties in the region and the world at large. However, paying lip service to the need for peace is categorically different from working for peace. Actions inside and outside the region spoke louder than words and peace remained elusive. During this time, Israel waged two devastating wars against Lebanon and Gaza. It had no qualms committing internationally forbidden acts and breaching international law encouraged and protected by the Administration of former US president Bush. To this date, Israel continues to lay a stifling siege to Gaza in contravention of the most rudimentary humanitarian principles and tenets of international law. These facts were confirmed by many investigations, and most recently published in the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Gaza. The head of the Mission concluded that Israel committed grave violations of international law, including war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

Unlike previous years, the international approach to the Middle East question changed. Addressing this issue became a priority followed by immediate action on the ground. This is reassuring. It is our sincere hope that these efforts will bear fruit. But the engagement by the new US administration, the members of the Security Council, the European Union, the Organization for Islamic Conference

and the Non-Aligned Movement has been continuously countered by Israeli measures and positions that ignore the most rudimentary givens of the peace process. Israel defies the policies of its friends and allies and undermines their will. Israel also challenges the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community. Finally and perhaps more than ever before, Israel revealed its true colors: an entity that consecrates racism, aggression and hegemony; an entity that balks at peace and challenges the advocates of peace. Israel refuses to freeze illegitimate settlement building and by so doing is in breach of its obligations under international law. Israel continues to confiscate Palestinian lands, build the apartheid wall, Judaizes Jerusalem, expels the inhabitants from their homes and brings settlers to replace them. This list is in no way exhaustive. These facts are substantiated by figures but we shall not dwell on this in detail in the interest of time. Suffice it to mention at this juncture that the two-state solution advocated by the international community has been rejected by the Israeli government. The Israeli Prime Minister's comments on this subject are sheer tactical maneuvers contradicted entirely by the policies pursued by his on the ground.

Mr. President;

President Bashar Al-Asad said that Peace is antithetical to occupation. Peace and occupation cannot coexist. He stressed that we in Syria seek a just and a comprehensive peace, and that peace is our strategic choice; it is a choice based on the implementation of resolutions 242 and 338, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. We supported every effort aimed at achieving this goal. To that end, we entered into indirect talks with Israel through the Turkish mediator and sought to arrive at a common ground that would ultimately enable us to launch direct negotiations. But the absence of a genuine political will to make peace and the war of aggression that Israeli government waged against Gaza brought this pursuit to a halt.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In full view of the world, and in defiance of its unanimous will, Israel chose to be a rejectionist. It chose to challenge the international community. This is a dangerous proposition, and a stand that threatens peace and security in the region. Continued occupation, Judaization of Jerusalem, intensification of settlement activities and the racist slogans presage serious consequences for the world. The world must not succumb to the dictates of Israeli extremists. It must

not allow Israel to persist in its violation of international law and defiance of international will and decisions.

Mr. President,

Iraq continues to bleed. The situation in Iraq is a cause for serious concern to us as a neighboring Arab country. We have continuously stressed the urgency of preserving the unity of Iraq's land and its people, guaranteeing its sovereignty, and safeguarding its independence and its Arab-Islamic identity. To this end, it is urgent to build the national Iraqi unity on the basis of national reconciliation that includes Iraqis of all stripes. National unity is the corner-stone of the reconciliation process, which will remain absent unless the necessary conditions for national reconciliation are realized.

We have continuously condemned all terrorist acts claiming the lives of innocent victims in Iraq. We have also repeatedly called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq and for the restoration of full Iraqi independence and sovereignty. We stressed our readiness to facilitate this withdrawal by extending our cooperation to maintain security in Iraq. It is our hope that the Iraqis will be soon able to arrive, through dialogue, at solutions consecrating Iraq's unity, strength and prosperity while remaining fully dedicated and loyal to the unity of the land of Iraq and its people.

Syria has been dedicated to strengthening bilateral Syrian-Iraqi relations in all their aspects. We established the council for strategic cooperation between the two countries. We were distressed by the recent "Bloody Wednesday" terrorist bombings in Baghdad and we strongly condemned these acts. But we were surprised to hear accusations leveled at us – accusations devoid of any truth – that we harbored those suspected of being the masterminds of these bombings. These claims and the ensuing developments are extremely unfortunate and cannot serve the interest of Iraq or Syria.

We are open to suggestions to solve the current crisis by demanding that real evidence be made available to substantiate the claims. This has not been done yet. We stress that protecting the Iraqi people and safeguarding their interests is one of our priorities. We also are keen on safeguarding the fraternal relations between the Iraqi and the Syrian people and express our satisfaction for the efforts of Turkey and the Secretary General of the League of the Arab League which are currently underway.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We followed with grave concern recent developments in Yemen. We hope that security will ultimately prevail. We support Yemen's unity, stability and the prosperity of its people.

Attempts to undermine Sudan's unity and compromise its security and sovereignty are also a cause of concern. We fully support Sudan and its leadership and stress the need to create favorable conditions conducive to a settlement of all pending issues. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts made by the State of Qatar in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the African Union.

Another cause for concern is the events unfolding in Somalia already afflicted with wars and internal strife. We call on our brothers in Somalia to work for national reconciliation and use dialogue as a means to settle their differences. We urge them to accord the unity of Somalia- which is the supreme national interest- precedence over any other consideration, and to lay the foundation of security and stability in their country.

We support the efforts of the African Union to settle existing differences that continue to plague some parts of the African continent, achieve development in African countries and promote the African role in the international system.

We also renew our call to lift the siege that has been imposed on Cuba for more than half a century.

Mr. President,

For years Syria has been calling for the establishment of the Middle East region as a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. To this end, Syria tabled a draft resolution before the Security Council in 2003. Today Syria stresses the need to commit Israel to comply with the resolution adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency on the 19th of this month regarding the Israeli nuclear capabilities in which the Agency called upon Israel to submit its nuclear facilities to its safeguard regime and to adhere to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

We recall the right guaranteed by the NPT that all states are entitled to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. We fully support resorting to constructive dialogue as a means to settle all differences.

Mr. President,

The world is still reeling from a crippling economic and financial crisis that has adversely affected the economic and social conditions of the majority of the countries of the world. Very few – if any – countries were spared its devastating effects. This crisis led many to question its root causes, shed light on the distortions in the financial system and its practices and highlight the sound ones that could have prevented its occurrence. The world cannot deal with the crisis as a fait accompli. We must seek answers that consecrate sound practices and remedy systemic imbalances that are bound to affect us all in the globalized world in which we live. Our common goal is to establish a more secure economic and financial world order.

Needless to say that the countries of the South have disparate economies and are more disadvantaged and adversely affected by the current crisis. The world's poor, ladies and gentlemen, end up paying the higher price of a breakdown that is not of their making. Rich states are therefore duty bound to provide all forms of support to the poorer countries to help them overcome this crisis. The poor countries have earned this support and any positive results this support will generate shall serve the interest of poor and rich countries alike. On the other hand, we call for a larger participation by the developing countries in the work of the G-20 to allow them to advance appropriate responses proposals to overcome the crisis.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

For building a better world, more just and secure, we, and many others, have often called for an enhanced and strengthened role for the United Nations. We believe that the moment is auspicious. We therefore call on all member states to work seriously to ensure compliance with the Charter of our international organization and introduce the necessary reforms in order to promote it, learning from the lessons of past decades, from our achievements and our failures. We sincerely look forward to a world governed by respect for international law, a world in which security, stability and prosperity reign supreme.