

29 November 2001

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian  
People**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies,

I am very pleased to take part in this commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and to address this Solemn Meeting in my capacity as President of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and supporting their aspirations to realize their rights, passed resolution 32/40 B, in December 1977, which declared that the 29 of November should be observed as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Ever since then, this day has become an annual occasion for the international community to renew its commitment to promoting the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people within the framework of lasting peace and prosperity in the region. Indeed, it is one of the most urgent and daunting task of the United Nations to bring lasting peace and economic prosperity to the Middle East region and in particular, to the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman,

The 1991 Middle East Peace Conference, followed by the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, was warmly welcomed by the international community as a sign of hope and an indication of political courage and a genuine desire to achieve peace and stability in the region.

However, failure to implement the signed agreements and a steady deterioration of the situation on the ground led to the outbreak of violence in late September 2000. Ever since, we have seen a spiral of violence and an increasing number of casualties which has led to a complete breakdown in the peace negotiations.

At the beginning of the violence last year, the General Assembly, at its resumed Tenth Emergency Special Session, passed resolution ES-10/7, reaffirming that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region should be based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which embody the principle of "land for peace".

Our wish is that the Palestinian people will soon be able to exercise its inalienable rights, as called for numerous times by the General Assembly, namely the right to self-determination

without external interference; the right to national independence and sovereignty; and the right to return to their homes and properties or, to receive compensation for those not choosing to return.

The lesson we have learned from the violence prevailing in the region since last year is that there is no alternative to the process of Israeli-Palestinian political negotiations based on international law and principles of mutual respect and understanding of each other's needs and interests.

I believe, in this regard, that the recommendations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee (Mitchell Committee) should serve as a road map guiding the parties concerned back to the negotiating table, and I therefore urge the parties to faithfully comply with the recommendations of the Committee.

Peace and economic development are inextricably linked to each other. Without economic development, peace is fragile. In that sense, I believe that the international donor community plays a very constructive role in providing a solid basis for lasting peace in the Middle East region. I encourage the donor community to continue and, indeed, to increase its economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

As it has done for many years, UNWRA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) continues to play a vital role through its essential relief services. The Agency should be assisted in all possible ways by the donor community in order to meet the growing needs of Palestinian refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

This very afternoon, the Assembly will take up the item entitled "Question of Palestine" and I look forward to a lively and constructive discussion. As President of the General Assembly, I would like to reiterate the Assembly's position that the United Nations has a special responsibility regarding the question of Palestine, until it is effectively resolved in all its aspects, in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is incumbent on all of us to see to it that this objective is accomplished.

On this commemorative day of solidarity with the Palestinian people, I assure you that in my capacity as President and as a professional economist who served, on the secondment of the World Bank, as Financial Adviser to the Government of Jordan from 1974 to 1976, I will do my utmost to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Middle East region and of the Palestinian people. And let me take this opportunity to welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Coordinator, the co-sponsors of the Peace Process and the European Union to resume and normalize the peace process.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Your Committee continues to take the lead in promoting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and supporting the peace process. In implementing the important mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, your Committee

has made and continues to make an important contribution towards peace, security and stability in the Middle East. I wish you every success in your mission.

Thank you.