

24 November 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

Excellencies

Ambassador Fodé Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,

Ambassador Gary Francis Quinlan, President of the Security Council,

Ambassador Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations,

Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this important meeting. Today is an opportunity to raise awareness among Member States and the international community on the unresolved question of Palestine and express our solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I congratulate Ambassador Fodé Seck for his leadership and also commend the Committee for its work this year within the framework of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The International Year, proclaimed by the General Assembly in Resolution 68/12, reflected the desire of the international community to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a final peace agreement. Sadly, this year did not bring the progress we were hoping for, as the direct peace talks were suspended.

The failure of the latest round of negotiations was almost immediately followed by an intensification of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The 50-day conflict last summer in Gaza resulted in the deaths of 1,500 and the injury of 11,000 Palestinian civilians, including children, women, elderly, and humanitarian workers. In Israel, five civilians lost their lives. Thousands of homes and critical infrastructure, including school and hospitals were also destroyed.

Excellencies,

The conditions on the ground remain volatile and the situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank is still a source of serious concern. In light of the recent violent incidents that led to civilian deaths and injuries, I strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians and attacks against religious sites. I call on all

parties to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions and incitement. All acts of violence must cease.

In addition, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical, with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The long-standing restrictions on the movement of people and goods continue to undermine the living conditions of the 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza. Therefore, the blockade should be lifted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regrettably, as we meet here today, the path towards a durable peace remains uncertain. The peace process now hangs from a thread and the process of rapprochement seems to be slipping away. The lack of progress and the renewed tension require sustained attention. The international community should continue to support the parties to overcome their differences and return to direct talks within a clear framework, based on internationally recognized parameters.

In this context, the time is particularly opportune for the United Nations to play a more decisive role in supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement in the Middle East. The negotiations should be based on a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and the State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders.

Equally important is the support of the international community to the Palestinian refugee population. Indeed, over 5 million Palestinian refugees continue to experience exceptionally difficult circumstances. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has played a vital role in providing basic services to alleviate the suffering of the growing Palestinian refugee population. I commend the Agency for its work. However, the recurring cycle of violence and the scarcity of funds hamper the Agency's ability to provide basic humanitarian services.

The Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the UNRWA is meeting on Wednesday, 3 December 2014. Taking into account that 97% of the Agency's funding comes from voluntary contributions, I reiterate my strong appeal to Member States and other international partners to make additional efforts to fully fund the Agency's core budget. I also urge new donors to make financial commitments to the Agency's work.

Excellencies,

As we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I invite Member States, the United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders to strengthen their valuable support and assistance to the Palestinian people to ensure the full realization of their inalienable rights and the establishment of a durable peace in the region.

I thank you for your attention.