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**Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Special Meeting: Observance of the International Day
of Solidarity with Palestinian People**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this Special Meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

I commend the Committee for its work over the last four decades and, in particular, over the past year, to raise awareness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the challenges facing the Palestinian people.

As we meet today, we do so one year on from the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine at UN Headquarters, one year on from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and one year out from marking 50 years since the occupation of Palestinian territory.

In many ways, it is an opportune time to reflect on our global progress to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Excellencies,

Since 1967, the United Nations has repeatedly affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the illegality of the Israeli settlements there.

And yet to this day, settlements continue to be expanded, Palestinian homes demolished, people subjected to arbitrary arrests and detention, and Palestinian families evicted and displaced from East Jerusalem.

It is a situation that the United Nations is gravely concerned about, and one that must be rectified urgently and in strict compliance with international law.

Building lasting and sustainable peace in the Middle East is fundamental to our efforts to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and to ensure that they are able to enjoy lives of dignity, opportunity, prosperity, and equality.

However, the pursuit of peace has been mired by continuing terror attacks against civilians, and brutal acts of violence by both sides. The ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip has had devastating humanitarian consequences, leaving many Palestinians dependent on international aid.

These actions do not contribute to the realization of peace. Rather, they serve to increase tension, undermine hard-won trust, and contradict the aim of achieving a two-State solution, with the establishment of a State of Palestine that lives side by side with the State of Israel, in peace and security.

I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to de-escalate tensions, to refrain from violence and provocations, and to avoid incitement and polarizing rhetoric that pushes peace further out of reach.

I also call all relevant parties to reinvigorate their efforts to support the Middle East peace process for the achievement of a two-State solution within recognized borders based on pre-1967 lines.

Excellencies,

When world leaders came together last year to adopt the 2030 Agenda, they aimed to transform our world. This included by building peaceful and inclusive societies, eliminating extreme poverty, empowering women, and girls, addressing inequalities, and protecting the health of our shared planet.

It was a universal masterplan that recognized the fundamental interlinkages between the realization of peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

It was also based on the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ – a global commitment that requires all of us to ensure that development gains reach our most vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized people, including those living under foreign occupation.

As part of global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, we must therefore see the Sustainable Development Goals as an important tool for realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People and ensuring that the transformative potential of the SDGs reaches them.

Excellencies,

It has been more than four decades since this Committee was established in response to the lack of progress in realizing the inalienable rights of Palestinian People, including the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to homes from which they had been displaced .

Yet, many of these rights remain unfulfilled today.

Let us therefore take the opportunity of today’s observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People – to reflect upon the tragic loss of life, liberty, livelihood, property, culture and rights that has occurred; to be reminded of the urgent need for a peaceful, comprehensive, just and

lasting solution to be found; and to call on the international community to redouble its efforts to support credible efforts to peacefully end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thank you.