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**Statement to the Security Council
by H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo,
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,
on the situation in the Middle East, including
the Palestinian Question**

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 October 2013)

Mr. President,

On your assumption of the Security Council presidency this month, I would like to express my congratulations and above all assure you of the full cooperation of the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman for his comprehensive and objective briefing.

Mr. President,

When I last had the opportunity to address the Council in July, shortly after the news broke of the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, I called for the sustained engagement by the international community to make sure the parties live up to their commitments, negotiate in good faith, and refrain from steps which jeopardise negotiations. We welcome the commitment by the parties to reach a comprehensive agreement within 9 months, while we await signs of tangible progress. We are encouraged by the recent announcement that US mediation efforts will be stepped up, and the pace of negotiations accelerated. We welcome the long overdue reactivation of the Quartet and its commitment to meet monthly at the envoy level to monitor progress. We feel, however, that the Council has yet to reach its full peacemaking potential vis-à-vis the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Mr. President,

There are worrying signs that on both sides groups with a vested interest in conflict are mobilising too. It is therefore imperative for the international community, particularly the Council as the guarantor of international peace and security, to remain vigilant, and act urgently and forcefully to counteract provocations during the current sensitive phase, uphold international law, and protect civilians.

We remain troubled by continued Israeli settlement announcements, such as the recent one in East Jerusalem, which poison the climate for negotiations. We call on the Council to act to ensure the implementation of its resolution 446 (1979). The EU directive on funding for Israeli projects in settlements is a welcome initiative which should be fully implemented. We encourage other States to follow suit. Real international pressure is needed to compel the Israeli Government to stop settlements and to make compromises at the negotiating table. We are also concerned about provocative activities near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, with the participation of Israeli Government officials, and the escalating attacks by settlers on Palestinians during the olive harvest. Arrest raids into Palestinian territories have further fuelled tensions. Even foreign diplomats delivering humanitarian aid were not immune from violence by Israeli forces. The volatile issue of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prisons continues to stoke tensions.

Mr. President,

Following the political initiatives mentioned, we should have been seeing an improvement of the situation on the ground, which would have contributed to a more credible process of negotiations. Paradoxically, Palestinians are facing an economic contraction, growing budget deficits and mass unemployment. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is worsening.

However, the Committee is of the view that the economic package and donor support can help contribute to the revitalization of the economy. Nevertheless they must be accompanied by an across the board lifting of restrictions imposed by the occupying Power. According to the World Bank these restrictions cost the Palestinian economy \$3.4 billion annually in the West Bank alone.

It should be pointed out that all estimates of the economic damage caused by the occupation come to the same conclusion: the Palestinian economy would be prospering if not for all these coercive measures.

Mr. President,

Our Committee places serious hopes on the current cycle of negotiations. It will remain fully committed to supporting the current peace initiative.

We encourage the Council to place its political and moral authority at the service of the search for a definitive and durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thank you for your attention.

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