

## **MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE - 29 NOVEMBER 2017**

The South African Government joins the international community today in commemorating the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This year's observance has an added significance as it marks 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Resolution 181 which partitioned Israel and Palestine, as well as 50 years since the start of the 1976 Arab-Israeli war and illegal occupation. This year therefore, is a clarion call on our collective conscious for our failure to address this critical issue.

The most significant development in this time has been the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a non-member Observer State in 2012 was an important step by the international community in affording the State that recognition that it deserves. To date, 137 States recognize the right of the State of Palestine achieve freedom and self-determination and we remain hopeful that soon, Palestine will be admitted as the 194<sup>th</sup> member of the United Nations.

After several attempts over the last few years to adopt a resolution condemning Israeli, settlement activity, on 23 December 2016, the Council unusually adopted a resolution condemning Israeli settlements. This resolution, 2334(2016) reaffirmed that the settlements have no legal validity, constituting a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the vision of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders. The Council furthermore demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities. It also note that it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the two sides through negotiations. South Africa will continue with its efforts both at a multilateral and bilateral level to contribute to advocate for the realization of the rights of the Palestinian to struggle for independence.

South Africa believes that the increased settlement expansion by Israel in Gaza constitutes a contravention of international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. It also illustrates the continued disregard for international norms necessary for the UN Security Council to fulfil its primary mandate of pursuing international peace and security and a direct violation of Security Council resolution 2334.

We call on the Israeli Government to cease its illegal policies, which continue to undermine the resumption of credible negotiations and to obstruct the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ensuing deterioration of

the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, is concerning and as a result the status quo is unsustainable and deserving immediate attention by the international community.

South Africa reiterates its view that the central responsibility for peace is primarily in the hands of the Palestinians and Israelis. We, as part of the international community, should support and encourage the parties to work towards this endeavor, in an effort to save generations of Palestinian children that have known no peace.

South Africa welcomes the reconciliation agreement reached by the two Palestinian factions, with the help of Egypt. The agreement is an essential step towards the full reunification of the West Bank and Gaza, and keeps alive prospects for the peaceful emergence of a Palestinian state. We also welcome the opening of the Rafah Border Crossing to ease access of the Palestinians and encourage more confidence building measures to help avert the humanitarian catastrophe facing both Gaza and the West Bank.

We call for urgent progress to be made on all tracks of the peace process aimed at achieving an end to the unlawful Israeli occupation of all of the Arab territories occupied since 1967. South Africa continues to support international efforts aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, existing side-by-side in peace with Israel within internationally recognized borders, based on those existing on 4th June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In this regard, we support the call on all parties in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the Arab League and the African Union to negotiate in good faith in order to reach a permanent and just solution.

We express our deep concern about the further decline of the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, as well as in flagrant violation of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). We call for the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which was unanimously adopted, and echoed the calls to present a written report on its implementation. South Africa reiterates its solidarity with the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, as well as our traditional support for a free and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders.

In our view, ending the occupation is in the interest of both Israel and Palestine alike and we therefore encourage all member states to direct all the parties towards attaining a lasting solution to the conflict.

I thank you.