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Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 38 (continued)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/72/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/368)

Draft resolutions (A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16)

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its efforts and its report (A/72/35). I would now like to read out a statement on behalf of the President of Iraq, Mr. Muhammad Fuad Masum, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“Today the world is celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with our brother Palestinian people, which coincides with the anniversary of United Nations resolution 181 (II), adopted in 1947, on the partition of Palestine. That annual celebration represents the unwavering recognition of the United Nations of responsibility for the plight of the Palestinian people that has endured almost

70 years. It is also a recognition of the righteousness of their cause and the international community’s commitment to supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in their long and legitimate struggle for self-determination and to bring an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories.

“This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Israeli aggression against Arab States, on 5 June 1967. Indiscriminate bombardments continue, together with the demolition of houses and expropriation of land in the occupied West Bank and Gaza by the occupying Power. Furthermore, the continuing expansion of settlements is undermining any opportunities for peace, while other actions are obstructing the international community’s efforts to establish a viable and sovereign Palestinian State with the same rights as every other country in the world.

“Today, the Republic of Iraq, which has persisted in its support for the cause of the Palestinian people and their just struggle for their legitimate rights, is concerned about the Israeli authorities’ indifference to the relevant United Nations resolutions and its ongoing destructive military activities in the Gaza Strip, especially as they claim the lives of civilians, including women, children and the elderly. Israel’s attacks have also destroyed infrastructure, schools — including those administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East — and holy places. Israel continues to

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accompany those acts of aggression through its expansionist policies by building settlements in the heart of Palestinian villages and cities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, thereby worsening the suffering of the Palestinian people, who have lost all hope of seeing the establishment of a just and lasting peace, given Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territories for more than 60 years.

"Today, on the International Day for Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Republic of Iraq reiterates its principled position that a fair and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question can be achieved only by establishing an independent, full-fledged Palestinian State, along the lines of the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and based on international legitimacy.

"Meanwhile, we urge the international community to work unremittingly to implement the relevant international conventions, the Charter of the United Nations, the Human Rights Declaration and international humanitarian law. We call on countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine, including some in Europe, to do so immediately and to support the Palestinian people's aspirations to realize their legitimate rights, including the right to peace, security and stability in the Middle East.

"The Republic of Iraq strongly condemns all acts of aggression by Israel on Palestinian territory. We also express our full support to the Palestinian National Authority and our solidarity with the Palestinian people. We call on the international community to support the efforts of the Palestinian National Authority in combating the negative consequences of the Israeli occupation, especially at the socioeconomic level, in the occupied territories and in East Jerusalem, which have led to very high losses every year. We urge all our Palestinian brothers to continue their democratic dialogue and efforts to achieve consensus with a view to consolidating Palestinian unity, which is the essential backbone for the defence of Palestine's right to move forward by building and protecting Palestine's future."

Ms. Radwan (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General

for his report (A/72/368) on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine and for his personal efforts in that regard. We would also like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the commendable efforts it has made. Within the context of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the honour to affirm the support of the Saudi Arabian Kingdom to the Palestinian people in their historic struggle to exercise their inalienable rights, especially self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

We condemn the continuing Israeli attacks on the Palestinian occupied territories. We believe that Israel alone is responsible for these acts — killing innocent Palestinians, expanding colonization, stealing Palestinian property, destroying thousands of houses and infrastructure and inflicting human and material damage on the Palestinian people. In the 70 years since the Nakba of 1948, the 50 years of occupation and the past 10 years of an unjust blockade, Palestinians have been subject to flagrant violations that could be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity, which humankind will never forget. Israel must end its acts of aggression, but so far it has ignored all of the international community's calls to halt its violations. We urge it to respect the relevant international resolutions and international law.

In Saudi Arabia's view, the question of Palestine should be a top priority for the international community in all its legal, humanitarian and political ramifications, including the effects of Israel's acts of aggression, with a view to ensuring that the relevant international resolutions are implemented and that all of Israel's violations of international law and human rights are ended. Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, must be afforded international protection so that they can live in dignity, peace and security within their own territory. Saudi Arabia reaffirms the Arab identity of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, which is an integral part of the Palestinian territories that Israel, the occupying Power, has annexed since 1967, in an illegal act that the international community has condemned. We condemn it, as we condemn Israel's attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We call for an end to those repeated violations and demand that Israel respect freedom of religion and

the sanctity of the holy sites and of the Muslims and Christians who worship in them.

If the colonizing Power Israel continues its illegal settlements, seizing Palestinian territory and expelling Palestinians, that is a flagrant example of ethnic cleansing. Its building of settlements undermines the possibility of a two-State solution and is proof that Israel has no interest in peaceful solutions but rather is aiming to change the facts on the ground through its occupation, depriving the Palestinian people of their rights. We call on Israel to end its expansion of settlements and implement the relevant international resolutions, which state that such settlements are illegal and must be dismantled. In our view, the occupying Power, Israel, is fully responsible for the atrocities committed by extremist settlers against the Palestinian people. We ask that the settlement leaders and the extremist settler groups be placed on a terrorist list, in accordance with the demands of international justice vis-à-vis States and those bodies charged with combating international terrorism.

My country not only supports our Palestinian brothers but in Beirut in 2002 helped to launch the historic initiative for peace that has evolved into the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, representing a significant development in the peace process that laid the foundations for a new phase in the efforts to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Amman Declaration, adopted at the Arab League Summit in March, reaffirmed the Arab Peace Initiative and confirmed the view of Arab stakeholders that a two-State solution is the only possible path to peace. Despite all these attempts to achieve peace on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to take unilateral measures designed to damage Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. It continues its brutal blockade of Gaza and its violations of international law and the human rights of the Palestinian people. We all know what the path to peace is. It requires an effective international mechanism for ending the Israeli occupation based on a clear road map and the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital along the 1967 borders, and accompanied by the liberation of all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan.

The Palestinian people have suffered for decades under this unique occupation and its discriminatory and oppressive policies. We commend Palestine's efforts in its struggle to defend its lands, people and holy sites.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will continue to do everything it can to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people, overcome this historical injustice and maintain our solidarity with the people of Palestine in their fight to achieve their legitimate rights and aspirations.

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): As we observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is extremely unfortunate to have to note that no progress has been made towards ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands over the past year. We deplore the fact that the international community's efforts have so far proved inadequate, owing to the Israeli regime's intransigence and its continued unlawful, criminal acts and policies directed at the people of Palestine.

We note with grave concern the latest disturbing developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, as reflected in the documents under consideration today (A/72/35 and A/72/368). The injustices have continued for more than seven decades, as evidenced by the systematic and unabated violations of the rights of the Palestinian people that include the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, the arrest and detention of Palestinians, including children, as well as the persistent acts of violence, terror and provocation committed by Israeli settlers and extremists, including at sensitive religious sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque. At the same time, the imposition of the illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip continues to cause massive deprivation and hopelessness and is fuelling a grave humanitarian crisis. In that way the Israeli regime deliberately and systematically violates each and every basic norm of international law, including international humanitarian law.

That regime arrogantly and flagrantly continues to violate a large number of United Nations resolutions, including at least 86 resolutions adopted by the Security Council, from resolution 54 (1948) to resolution 2334 (2016), on illegal settlement activities, as well as many other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and United Nations specialized agencies in response to Israel's illegal occupation, repeated acts of aggression, well-documented atrocities, apartheid policies and war crimes against the Palestinian people. It is unfortunate that a host of criminal practices and policies are being perpetrated by that regime with impunity, and that the international community has yet to take any significant measures to address them.

The rapid growth of illegal settlements in the Palestinian territory constitutes not only a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but also a war crime. It is yet again another clear indication that the Israeli regime has never had any interest in peace with the Palestinians, and its participation in the talks has just been a tactic to buy time and continue its policy of aggression and expansion. Emboldened by a number of changes in the political landscape, it now seems to have decided to totally negate any right of Palestinian statehood.

Israel also continues to flout all international regimes that govern weapons of mass destruction by refusing to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. Nuclear weapons in the hands of that regime pose the most serious threat to the security of all States in the Middle East.

As in the past, the situation in Palestine requires urgent international attention and action. The continued illegal and brutal Israeli occupation not only causes misery to the Palestinian people; it also lies at the origin of various tensions in the Middle East, and is dangerously inflaming the volatile situation in the region, with far-reaching and serious consequences for international peace and security. While Israeli criminal acts and policies are worsening and could at any moment trigger further crises, the extremely fragile situation on the ground must be seriously addressed to avert further destabilization.

Regrettably, and despite the clear global consensus on the illegality of Israeli policies and practices on Palestinian territory, the Security Council continues to be paralysed, failing to uphold its obligations. That must change. The Security Council should shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and international law to compel the Israeli regime to respect the norms of international law, including international humanitarian law, and to end its war crimes and human rights violations against the Palestinian people and its illegal occupation of Palestinian land, as well as to end the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the unwavering support of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the oppressed people of the Palestinian nation. Once again, we assure them

that we will do everything in our power to help them realize the cause of a free and prosperous Palestine.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): The delegation of the Republic of Indonesia is pleased to participate in today's and yesterday's sequence of events marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which commenced yesterday morning with the special meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the Trusteeship Council Chamber and continues with this meeting on the question of Palestine.

We commend and thank the Chair of the Committee for the introduction of draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16, which we will soon adopt, and the Vice-Chair for presenting the annual report of the Committee (see A/72/PV.59), as contained in document A/72/35.

We share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, in document A/72/368, about the absence of political progress on the Palestinian question and the high risk of further violence and radicalization. Indonesia also takes this opportunity to once again reaffirm its support of the two-State vision and to affirm, as the Secretary-General has done, that nobody who claims to object to it has come up with a viable alternative that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Israelis and Palestinians.

With a sustainable and just peace in mind, we share the position set out in the report of the Quartet and various Security Council resolutions that Israel must take the necessary steps to stop settlement expansion and construction. We, the international community, cannot wait for another 50 years of occupation — 50 years of tragic history, full of the grievances and suffering of the Palestinian people. That is a crime, one that, as time elapses, will increasingly be forgotten unless we keep being reminded of the peril of our Palestinian brothers and sisters, and unless we take action in this Hall. Their pain and suffering result from the flagrant violation of human rights and of the decency of humankind.

Indonesia reiterates its call for issues such as the violation of fundamental human rights and freedom of movement, poverty, discrimination and racism, fear and intimidation and extrajudicial killings, as well as other forms of human rights abuses that have been conducted by the occupying Power, to be put to an end. While the policy of expanding illegal settlements by the occupying Power continues to exacerbate the situation,

the war created by Israel is not only physical in nature, but is also a social and cultural barrier that limits the livelihoods of Palestinians.

With regard to the Palestinian economy, it cannot be put on a development path that is sustainable in the long term because of the systematic nature of the occupying Power's planning policies, laws and practices. It is clear that the illegal blockades and barrier zones imposed by Israel undermine the current Palestinian economy and its potential and exacerbate Palestinian dependence on imports and foreign aid.

The deliberate destruction of infrastructure and services, confiscation of land, restrictions on access to water and the expansion of illegal settlements have caused much harm to the Palestinian people. The Palestinian living standards and productive capacities and activities are destroyed because of prolonged restrictions on the movement and trade of the Palestinian people. We must allow Palestinian children to go to school in peace; we cannot let them grow up in a harmful and polluted environment.

In the search for progress and peace, Indonesia remains committed to the two-State solution within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016) and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the report of the Middle East Quartet and the principle of land for peace. Much needs to be done to ensure that all those resolutions are implemented.

Now is the right time for the international community to finally put an end to the occupation of Palestinian territory. Let us see no more blood and tears falling on the ground on Palestinian lands, and let our call for peace not fall on deaf ears. Having said that, Indonesia is pleased to lend our full support to all the draft resolutions to be adopted and is determined to see them implemented.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The question of Palestine is at the centre of the Middle East issue and is fundamental to peace in the Middle East. A comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian question without further delay is in the interest of all peoples in the region, including the Palestinian people, and is conducive to peace and stability around the world.

As things stand now, the Palestinian-Israeli talks remain deadlocked, and there are incessant, violent conflicts that result in grave humanitarian disasters. Israel's persistent settlement expansion has severely undermined the mutual trust between the two parties. The international community must have a greater sense of urgency and work for a political solution to the Palestinian question by addressing the root causes, as well as the symptoms, in order to safeguard international justice and promote regional peace and stability.

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to yesterday's meeting marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in which he expressed the Chinese people's sympathy with and support for the Palestinian people. In July, President Xi put forward a four-point proposal on facilitating the settlement of the Palestinian question, which is the overarching guidance for China's engagement in the next phase of the political settlement process. China is ready to join the international community in pushing for a solution to the Palestinian question based on the following efforts.

The first is to steadfastly push ahead with the political process based on the two-State solution. On the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, parties should continue working towards a negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Palestinian question.

Secondly, we must uphold the concept of common, integrated, cooperative and sustainable security. Palestine and Israel need to embark on a path to security that is built and shared by both countries. China appeals for the good-faith implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) so as to immediately put an end to all settlement activities in the occupied territories and to take immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians. We call for resumption of talks as early as possible to expedite the political settlement of the Palestinian question and achieve common, sustained security.

Thirdly, we must further coordinate international efforts and scale up the synergy for peace. Recently, the international community has intensified diplomatic efforts to bring the two parties back to the negotiating table. China supports all efforts conducive to the political settlement of the Palestinian question. We applaud Egypt's contributions to intra-Palestine

reconciliation. We hope to see greater coordination within the international community to advance the peace initiatives with wide participation.

Fourthly, we must take an integrated approach and promote peace through development. China sees both Palestine and Israel as important partners along the route of the Belt and Road Initiative. Guided by the concept of promoting peace through development, China is committed to facilitating mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries by providing greater access to the avenues for such cooperation and by supporting, as always, Palestine's faster development. That will reinforce the basis for peace and harmony and minimize impediments to peace talks.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and a responsible major player, China has never been absent from the international endeavour to peacefully resolve the question of Palestine. We have always maintained an objective and impartial stance and have worked actively to encourage peace and push for negotiations. We consistently and firmly support and contribute to the Middle East peace process. We support the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights. We support the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with full sovereignty, based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Earlier this year, China received visits from Palestinian President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on separate occasions, during which we engaged both parties on the Palestinian question. We will continue to play an active and constructive role to help bring about a solution to the Palestinian question. We are also keen for Palestine and Israel to seize the opportunity to meet each other halfway, rebuild trust and resume peace talks without delay.

The way the Middle East situation as a whole is evolving is a cause for concern. Some countries in the region are trapped in protracted turmoil. There are complex and intertwined hotspot issues, and terrorism is spreading, and all of that poses a severe challenge to international peace and security.

China pays close attention to the Middle East situation, and we hope that the international community can work in concert for peace, stability and development in the region.

First, our focus should be on the political settlement of hotspot issues in the region, and parties concerned should be encouraged to abandon their zero-sum-game logic and resolve their differences through inclusive political dialogue.

Secondly, Middle Eastern countries and the international community at large should work in unity to combat terrorism relentlessly by upholding uniform standards and applying a combination of measures in an integrated manner. They should enhance cooperation in border control and law enforcement, cut off terrorist financing and weapons supply, roll back the dissemination of terrorist ideology and prevent any spillover or return of terrorist fighters.

Thirdly, the way in which Middle East affairs are handled must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That entails respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, respecting the right of all countries to independently choose their political system and development model and adhering to the universally recognized and basic norms of international relations.

Fourthly, our focus should be on the root causes of each conflict, promoting inclusive and balanced development; respecting the diversity of civilizations and fostering the awareness that humankind is a community with a shared future.

China is ready to work hand in hand with the rest of the international community in the quest for a solution to end the turmoil in the Middle East for the early attainment of peace and development in the region.

Mr. Paolino Laborde (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On the occasion of another anniversary of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we echo the words of other Members of this Organization, hoping that we may very soon witness the long-awaited peace that would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate right to be part of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State.

Yesterday marked 70 years since the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), by which it was decided to partition Palestine and create two States, one Arab and one Jewish. Uruguay strongly supported that solution, convinced that it would allow Israel and Palestine to live together in peace and security.

Today, seven decades later, Uruguay wishes to once again reaffirm its support for the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, in an environment of renewed cooperation and free from any threat or action that could undermine peace. Uruguay also reiterates its support for a solution with two independent States, as we are convinced that that is the only way that will allow for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine.

Uruguay maintains strong ties of friendship with the State of Israel and also with the State of Palestine. Palestine's full membership in the Organization, exercising its people's right to self-determination, is the logical consequence of the process that has been under way since it was recognized as a full-fledged State and a responsible State, one capable of completely eliminating terrorism from its territory, and incitement and endorsement of terrorism, while living in peace with the State of Israel and the other States in the region.

Early on, Uruguay recognized the State of Israel, and later, when we determined that the inconclusive process could not continue to drag on, the State of Palestine. It is crucial for the international community to step up its efforts to assist in the process and encourage the parties to return to the negotiating table with a view to achieving a peaceful, fair, negotiated and lasting solution that is in line with international law and takes the interests of both nations into account. To achieve that, the parties must comply with their obligations under international law and refrain from adopting unilateral decisions that hinder dialogue. Clear political signals are needed to break the vicious circle of disputes and violence.

Uruguay remains concerned about the expansion of settlements in territories occupied by the Israeli authorities, despite the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 2334 (2016), as well as the confiscation of land and the continued destruction of Palestinian homes. We urge Israel to stop such practices. Under international law, those settlements are illegal, and they are contrary to the recommendations of the Middle East Quartet and Security Council resolutions. If the current trend continues, the two-State solution will be rendered practically impossible.

To conclude, Uruguay reaffirms its willingness to continue working to reactivate the peace process through all existing initiatives, to break the status quo

and, in that way, to make progress in the peace talks and the two-State solution.

Mr. Al-Shanfari (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman, I wish to commend and thank the President for convening this meeting to examine the question of Palestine. We are also grateful to Ambassador Fodé Seck, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal and Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We thank the Committee for its report in document A/72/35, which was introduced earlier (see A/72/PV.59). We also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the question of Palestine (A/72/368).

Since the question of Palestine was first raised in the United Nations 70 years ago, the situation has remained unchanged. No settlement has been reached that allows the Palestinian people to enjoy their rights, and over the past seven decades Israel has continued to carry out illegal and inhumane practices. Israel continues to expand its settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, thus violating all the rights of the Palestinian people and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016).

My country calls on the international community, represented in the United Nations and the Security Council, to fulfil its responsibility and call upon Israel to work in conformity with international resolutions, so as to guarantee international protection for the Palestinian people. We also call on the international community to compel Israel to end those practices and its attempts to alter the demography of Palestinian territories. We must move towards negotiations, so as to end that occupation and ensure an independent sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Israel must also withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan and the rest of the territory still under occupation in southern Lebanon.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to welcome the recent Palestinian national reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas, in Cairo. That will allow the Palestinian Government to expand its authority and power throughout Palestinian territories and end divisions, therefore serving the needs of the Palestinian people. We reiterate the readiness of the Sultanate of Oman to cooperate with all parties towards

Palestinian unity. We also commend the efforts of the Arab Republic of Egypt to achieve that agreement.

In conclusion, the delegation of my country reiterates the need for both parties to return to dialogue and negotiation. We call on those interested in the peace process, including the Middle East Quartet and the Security Council, to take on a positive role by carrying out vital and effective action in order to find a just and lasting solution that would create an independent State of Palestine, within the internationally recognized pre-1967 borders, allowing that country to live side by side with Israel in peace.

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba wishes to align itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (see A/72/PV.59) on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We thank His Excellency Ambassador Neville Melvin Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia and Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the Committee's report (A/72/35) and for his statement (see A/72/PV.59).

Cuba expresses its deep concern about the situation in the region of the Middle East, which is afflicted by violence, interference in internal affairs, foreign aggression and long-standing conflicts, such as that between Palestine and Israel — the nucleus of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is time to settle historical debts with the State of Palestine and restore the inalienable rights of its people, which have been violated for half a century during Israeli occupation, repression and collective punishment, destruction and confiscation of land and Palestinian homes, forced displacement, and colonialist settlements in occupied Palestinian territories.

The numerous violations of international law, in particular of humanitarian law and human rights principles, committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the context of its 50 years of foreign military occupation of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan since 1967, continue today, and those violations have increased during the period covered in the Committee's report. The Security Council must adopt tangible measures to do away with this historical injustice, urgently ending Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories since 1967.

An immediate end must be brought to the embargo in the Gaza Strip, which has lasted for almost a decade. The critical situation caused by the air, land and sea blockade has led to almost total isolation and great privation for the 2 million Palestinian people in the area. In Gaza, a grave humanitarian crisis persists, and the socioeconomic conditions have sunk to the lowest levels since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. That has created an extremely difficult and unsustainable situation that requires an immediate solution.

The two-State solution and a comprehensive, just, peaceful and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question will not be possible as long as Israel continues to violate its obligations under international law and the Charter of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as to violate the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

Cuba also demands an end of the occupation of the Syrian Golan. We reiterate that any measure that has been taken or that will be taken with the goal of modifying the legal, physical and demographic status and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as Israel's measures to exercise its jurisdiction and administration in that territory, constitute violations of international law, international agreements, the Charter and the resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the Fourth Geneva Convention. They also challenge the international community.

In such a complex scenario, we must not forget to seek solutions to situations arising in the region that also have an impact on the possibility of achieving peace. We must find a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the city of Jerusalem that takes into account the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian and Israeli parties. We must also not forget that the imposition of legislation, jurisdiction and administration by Israel, be it in Jerusalem or in the occupied Syrian Golan, is not a neutral and worthless action, but an obstacle to the peace process.

As stated in his message of solidarity yesterday with the Palestinian people, our Minister for Foreign Affairs said:

“Cuba has historically maintained its strong support for and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people, based on a clear and unequivocal position of principles in favour of self-

determination and the creation of an independent Palestinian State. We will continue to uphold the right of the Palestinian people to establish a free, independent and sovereign State with its capital in East Jerusalem and its pre-1967 borders, as well as the right of return for the Palestinian refugees.

“The international community must not remain unmoved in the face of abuses and violations against the Palestinian people. We support all actions that enable the implementation of a political negotiation process to ensure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and achieve a just and lasting peace for all peoples of the region.”

In November 2012, the General Assembly adopted the historic decision to grant Palestine the status of an Observer State at the United Nations. Just as we lent our support at that time, Cuba will continue to support the entry of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations, as is the manifest desire of the vast majority of States. The historical debt to the Palestinian people is enormous and must be paid.

Allow me to conclude my statement by reiterating Cuba’s unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and its determination to continue supporting them in their legitimate struggle for justice, dignity, peace and the defence of their inalienable right to self-determination and sovereignty.

Mr. Bessedik (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my deepest thanks for the efforts of the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to defend the legitimate and just rights of the Palestinian people. The rights of the Palestinian people continue to be violated under the Israeli occupation.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People reminds us of the responsibility of the international community as a whole and of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Palestinian people and their just cause, as well as of the failure of the international community to fulfil the obligations it undertook in 1947 under the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, seventy years ago. In the period since then the Palestinian people have not managed to enjoy their legitimate rights and their freedom or to establish their independent and viable State, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Today also coincides with the centenary of the sinister and ominous Balfour Declaration, which marked the beginning of the plight of the Palestinian people, which is still continuing today. It is deeply deplorable that some insist on celebrating the anniversary of the Declaration, in which promises were made by those who did not have right to make them to those who did not deserve them.

The world is still witnessing the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation and illegal settlement policies, including the establishment of the apartheid wall, the displacement of the Palestinian civilians and the collective punishment and the blockade on the Gaza Strip for more than 11 years. There are most recent violations of international norms and law, including international humanitarian law, notwithstanding the recurrent international calls for an end to the occupation.

The challenge posed by Israel’s occupation to international legitimacy and its ongoing manoeuvring to impose a de facto policy on the Palestinian people, including the Judaization and separation of the city of Jerusalem, not to mention the day-to-day barbaric and atrocious practices of the Israeli occupation army, which violate the dignity and freedom of the Palestinian people, would not be ongoing were it not for the indifference of international parties with regard to upholding their responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people.

Given their ongoing suffering and the absence of any prospects for a settlement to this crisis, the international community is still responsible for finding a way out of the long-standing Palestinian issue and for responding to the aspirations of Palestinians to live in freedom, dignity and peace in a viable, independent State. Therefore, the international community should fully uphold its responsibilities and redouble its efforts to provide the Palestinian people with international protection, meanwhile putting pressure on the Israeli regime to end its occupation of the Palestinian territories and to help the Palestinian people to establish their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. That would enable them to control their natural resources, in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

From this rostrum, I wish to reaffirm Algeria’s unconditional and ongoing support for the Palestinian cause and its complete support of the Palestinian

people in their just and legitimate struggle and ongoing efforts to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In that regard, we applaud the efforts for national reconciliation. We reiterate that the steadfastness and struggle of the Palestinian people, their determination to defend their inalienable national rights and access to their holy sites and their overcoming the systematic Israeli violations will culminate in freedom and salvation.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Algeria reiterates its principled position of supporting the Palestinian people. We therefore call on the international community and the United Nations to put an end to the flagrant violations by the Israeli authorities and to step up efforts to enable the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mr. Mayong Onon (Malaysia): Allow me to thank the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his statement yesterday (see A/72/PV.59). Malaysia applauds the Committee's annual efforts and joins the international community in commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The successful organization of activities in cooperation with Governments, United Nations bodies, parliamentarians and intergovernmental and civil-society organizations is testimony to the unwavering support for the cause of the Palestinian people.

My delegation appreciates the indispensable work on the question of Palestine carried out by the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the other entities within the United Nations system. We also commend the commitment, the efforts and the contribution of the Secretary-General and the United Nations in faithfully carrying out their responsibilities towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

The question of Palestine has been before us for seven decades now. However, we are still nowhere near to resolving the conflict and to achieving a just and durable peace between Palestine and Israel. Malaysia reaffirms its long-standing commitment to supporting Palestine's continuous efforts for self-determination, sovereignty and independence, underpinned by various international principles and laws.

My delegation deeply regrets that Israel's continued building of illegal settlements on Palestinian lands,

including in East Jerusalem, further weakens the possibility of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Those illegal policies and actions are in blatant disregard of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Despite the provocations of the occupying Power, Malaysia appreciates the readiness and commitment of the Palestinians to continue negotiations. That spirit should be reciprocated by Israel. We therefore urge the international community to further demand that Israel immediately cease all its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory before the viability of a two-State solution is completely eroded.

Malaysia welcomes the recent signing of the unity agreement, facilitated by Egypt. We hope that all Member States will support the unity Government under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas.

Malaysia remains concerned about the vulnerability of security at sites in the holy city. Freedom of religious expression must be allowed to prevail. The sanctity of religious sites must be respected. We call on the occupying Power, Israel, not to take any action that would alter the status of the Islamic holy sites. Thus we continue to urge unrestricted and unhindered access for Muslim worshippers to the Al-Aqsa mosque.

On the situation in Gaza, my delegation notes with grave concern, from the reports before us, the scale of deterioration leading to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Food, clean water, sanitation and electricity remain scarce, with vast networks having been destroyed by the Israeli authorities. Access to medical treatment and higher education, family and social life, employment and economic activities are almost unheard of. We urge the international community to continue to provide generous support to all United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and other organizations working on the ground to alleviate the catastrophic conditions and to expedite rebuilding efforts for vital necessities.

Malaysia also urges all Member States to continue to demand an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza in order to enable legitimate and sustained movement of persons and goods, including construction materials, humanitarian aid and commercial flows. The economy of Gaza should be allowed to re-establish itself and to recover. My delegation firmly believes that the normalization of the situation in Gaza would significantly reduce tension and facilitate the

resumption of the political process. The citizens of Gaza should not be allowed to continue to live in a de facto open-air prison.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, Malaysia fully endorses the Committee's report and its recommendations. My delegation is also pleased to co-sponsor all resolutions under this important agenda item.

To conclude, my delegation reiterates that there is an urgent need to address the root cause of the conflict, which is occupation by Israel. Israel, the occupying Power, must end the occupation and must comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions.

Malaysia reiterates its long-standing support for the inalienable right of self-determination for the Palestinian people and a just, comprehensive and definitive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We firmly support the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Yemberdiyev (Kazakhstan): I wish to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the work that it has done so far for the sake of the Palestinian people.

The position of Kazakhstan remains unchanged, balanced and consistent. We see the two-State solution, with peaceful coexistence, as the only viable and durable option between Palestine and Israel. That should be in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant Security Council resolutions and other mechanisms and initiatives, such as the road map for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Madrid principles and the land-for-peace principle.

We support the right of Palestinian people to self-determination in the creation of a free, sovereign and independent State within the international borders of 1967. At the same time, we support the right of Israel to peace and security.

Investment in building strong Palestinian institutions, inter alia, promoting reforms in the security sector, the military, law enforcement and the judicial and

correctional systems, together with new legislation, will ensure the rule of law and good governance. Such steps, together with encouraging unity among the various factions as well as promoting inclusive participatory development processes, will over time yield dividends.

The Middle East is a remarkable part of the ancient land of great, incredible Asia. All of the world's major religions — Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam — were born on the sacred soil of that continent. Likewise, the spiritual teachers and prophets of humankind, ranging from Lao-tzu, Gautama Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad to the greatest of contemporary thinkers of the eminence of Mahatma Gandhi, were born in that part of the world. Is it impossible for the continent, in particular the Middle East portion, to absorb and be inspired by the rich legacy that has accumulated over the ages and thus synthesize it into a new concept of cooperation and collective security?

Finally, in the interest of peace in this long-suffering region, we shall collect and synthesize matters as best we can. We therefore must collectively seek the best way to meet the contemporary challenges of that part of the globe and lay new foundations for the existence of humankind in a world that is more integrated than ever before. Let me assure the Assembly that Kazakhstan will do its utmost to ensure peace and security throughout the Middle East as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that the consideration of draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16 will take place following the conclusion of the debate on agenda item 37.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

Agenda item 37

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/72/333 and A/72/368)

Draft resolutions (A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolutions A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Further to the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of Egypt with regard to the question of Palestine and the role of the United Nations in the preservation of the rights of peoples within their territories (see A/72/PV.59), I am introducing, on behalf of the Group of Arab States, draft resolutions A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17, on the situation in the Middle East.

Draft resolution A/72/L.11 reaffirms the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on occupied Jerusalem that determined that all legislative and administrative measures taken by Israel to alter the legal status of the city are null and void. Regarding the situation in Jerusalem, there must be internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure freedom of conscience, and there must be an end to colonization and to other such illegitimate acts, including the excavations in the Old City and in the holy sites. The draft resolution has not been changed except to note, in the preambular part, Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which underlines that the Council will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations.

Draft resolution A/72/L.17, on the Syrian Golan, recalls Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and declares that Israel has so far failed to comply with it. It reaffirms the applicability of the relevant provisions of the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. It stresses the illegality of Israeli settlement construction and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and demands that Israel withdraw from all of the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and comply with its obligations in that regard. The draft resolution has not been modified from the resolution on the same question adopted at the previous session (resolution 71/24).

The sponsors of these two draft resolutions are of the view that the international community must deal with the issue of the Middle East as a whole, because the people in that area all aspire to peace, prosperity and harmonious coexistence. It must show genuine commitment and political will to free all Palestinian and Arab occupied territories in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and international law.

We call on all States to support these draft resolutions and to reaffirm the international community's view that we must achieve the objectives and principles of international law on which the United Nations was founded.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt for introducing draft resolution A/72/L.11, on Jerusalem, and draft resolution A/72/L.17, on the Syrian Golan. I would also like to thank all the States that have previously voted in favour of the resolution on the Syrian Golan.

Since its twenty-fifth session, in 1970, the General Assembly has considered the item on the situation in the Middle East on a yearly basis. At every session, the Assembly calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its occupation of Arab territories and reaffirms that any measures taken by Israel to impose its own laws, jurisdiction and administration on Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal, baseless and null and void.

In all its recurrent resolutions, the General Assembly is fully aligned with the position unanimously expressed by the Security Council in resolution 478 (1980), on occupied Jerusalem, and resolution 497 (1981), on the occupied Syrian Golan. Those two resolutions rejected the provocative actions of the Israeli authority in annexing Palestinian Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and considered the Israeli actions null and void and totally groundless.

Our meeting today coincides with the hundredth anniversary of the sinister and ominous Balfour Declaration, which is legally known at the international level as a promise by one who does not own to those who do not deserve. It is a colonial declaration whose devastating repercussions are still being witnessed not only by the Palestinian people, but also by the whole region.

Our meeting today also coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, which is totally supported and protected by certain countries, including permanent members of the Security Council, and which has emboldened Israel, the occupying Power, in the region. Consequently, Israel has refused to implement hundreds of United Nations resolutions for decades. Moreover, Israel is expanding and annexing a lot of Arab and Palestinian territories, as

well as perpetrating documented systematic aggression and crimes, which are tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan is equally bleak, as Israel still refuses to return the occupied Golan to its motherland, Syria, and to comply with United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Since the first day of this deplorable occupation, Israel has been trying to change the legal and political status of the occupied Syrian Golan, including by imposing Israeli citizenship on our steadfast people there and through systematic human rights violations and terrorist policies, including racial discrimination, arbitrary detention, and such unlawful restrictions as the denial of the right to resist occupation, which is completely protected under international norms and laws. Indeed, when those who resist occupation are detained, they are subject to mock trials that end in long sentences for them.

We also remind the international community of the situation of Syria's Mandela — the freedom fighter and prisoner, Sedqi Al-Maqet — who was rearrested by the Israeli occupation forces after having spent 27 years in Israeli prisons. Al-Maqet was sentenced to another 14 years in prison because he exposed, via video and audio, Israel's cooperation with the terrorists of the Al-Nusra Front. We call upon the international community to pressure Israel to release Sedqi Al-Maqet, Amal Abu Saleh and all others detained in the Israeli prisons.

One of the most deplorable and unprecedented violations committed by Israel against our people in the Golan is the fact that the occupying Power has, for more than 50 years, denied them their most fundamental right to communicate with and meet their families in their motherland, Syria. This right has been converted into the offence of communicating with a hostile foreign State. The Israelis have also denied patients who cannot afford medical treatment the right to go to Damascus to get free medical treatment in the hospitals of that city.

In addition to the foregoing and quite ironically, the occupying Power denies the people of the Golan the right to build houses on their own land. Worse, it is also demolishing the houses that the people of the Golan have built on their ancestors' land under the pretext that they did not have a licence. Furthermore, Israel has also committed violations in the cultural and educational spheres, as it has stolen many relics from archeological sites in the Golan and imposed the Israeli

curriculum on students who are entitled to be learning the Arab-Syrian curriculum. It has also expelled a host of teachers for allegedly resisting the occupation and replaced them with Israeli teachers. In addition, there are only a handful of schools in the region.

The Israeli violations against our people in the Syrian Golan do not end there. There are also socioeconomic violations. The Israeli occupation has confiscated more than three fourths of the Golan land and has converted most of the agricultural land to military sites and to more than 40 settlements, which are populated by more than 23,000 Israeli settlers, and to landfills for toxic waste. Israel has also constructed wind-power-generation plants and is engaging in oil-exploration projects. It has taken control of underground-water resources and diverted them to Israeli settlements, thereby denying the people of the Syrian Golan their water rights or their right to sell their agricultural products in their motherland, Syria.

The ongoing undue and sinister silence on the part of the international community and the United Nations in the face of the Israeli policies has emboldened Israel to further violate the separation of forces agreement and Security Council resolutions, including by providing all kinds of support to terrorist groups in the area of separation, including Jabhat Al-Nusra and Da'esh. We would like to reiterate that, on 3 November 2017, Israel provided transportation to hundreds of Jabhat Al-Nusra terrorists to the town of Hadar, which is in the area of separation north of the Golan, in order to carry out an attack, providing them with support and coverage. The attack resulted in 17 deaths, as well as casualties among Syrian civilians, most of whom are women and children.

Israel's unlimited support for terrorists in Syria goes further. Israel, the occupying Power, has been carrying out air strikes against many sites within Syria. The unlimited Israeli support to armed terrorist groups does not come as a surprise because they have common interests and a shared goal. The first target of the armed terrorist groups in Syria was the Syrian air-defence sites, which defend Syria against Israeli hostilities.

My country reaffirms its sovereign right to the occupied Syrian Golan within the borders of 4 June 1967. This right is not negotiable and is irrevocable. Our occupied land and usurped rights will be fully reclaimed by their owners, and Israeli settlers should leave our land in the Golan. We will never surrender our right to reclaim our occupied land and to free our

people who suffer under the yoke of Israeli occupation, in accordance with the resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations.

Finally, it is no longer acceptable for the States Members of the United Nations and the Organization to adopt a position of solidarity in dealing with the Israeli occupation because it does not lead to fruitful results. We continue to believe that the United Nations should uphold its historical responsibility to adjust its approach and take immediate measures to put an end to the Israeli occupation and bring about Israel's withdrawal from Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, to the borders of 4 June 1967 and to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981) and 2334 (2016).

In conclusion, I call upon all States to vote in favour of the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan and other draft resolutions pertaining to Palestine.

Ms. Shareef (Maldives): The Middle East is the cradle of human civilization and the place of origin of several early advancements in science and technology, and yet the region is plagued by conflicts that have inflicted enormous human suffering, poverty and terror on hundreds of millions of people. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General and his good offices for the ongoing efforts to find lasting solutions to conflicts that appear to be intractable.

Indeed, this year marks 47 years since the General Assembly first considered the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East. After more than four decades of discussion in the Assembly, the question of Palestine remains unresolved, which epitomizes the failure of the international system to bring an end to the suffering of the people of the Middle East.

The continued illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel is the cause of the most protracted conflict in the Middle East, and its resolution — a fair and just solution based on relevant Security Council resolutions — will be vital to bringing peace and tranquillity to the region. The establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on Palestinian lands within pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel, is the only solution and answer to the question of Palestine. That is the solution that the Security Council demands, in particular in resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016). The Maldives therefore calls on Israel to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions,

respect the legal obligations it undertook in the Oslo Accords and implement the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

In recent months, violence and illegal activities by the occupying Power, Israel, have been increasing dramatically. According to briefings held in the Security Council in the past few months, the Israeli Government's provocative law to retroactively legalize settlements has resulted in the approval of more than 2,000 housing units in Area C of the occupied West Bank at the cost of Palestinian-owned structures. These acts of structural alterations to the occupied Palestinian territories and inflammatory rhetoric by the Israeli Government continue to dim the hopes of an end to the decades-long conflict through a two-State solution. Achieving a negotiated solution is the only way to achieve lasting peace, and now is the time for the United Nations and the international community to create the conditions for both parties to return to negotiations. Now is the time for meaningful action.

The Maldives is deeply concerned by the ongoing conflict in Syria, which has entered its seventh year. The conflict has resulted in the deaths of hundreds and thousands of people, and entire cities have been reduced to rubble. The deteriorating humanitarian situation has displaced millions of Syrians inside and outside the country, resulting in Syrian refugees figuring among the largest refugee communities in the world.

The violence and terror unleashed by the terrorist group Da'esh is among the most serious threats that the Middle East has faced in years. The barbaric acts of violence that the group perpetrates and promotes in the Middle East and in various parts of the world represent a serious assault on the religion of Islam and must be stopped. The Maldives condemns any attempt to attribute terrorism to any religion, culture or tradition.

The Maldives has always believed that if we are to achieve a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflicts in the Middle East, we must be ready for political compromise and constructive engagement. The Maldives stands ready to work with all concerned parties to find a lasting solution to the conflicts. The Maldives will always be a partner in crafting shared solutions for our shared destiny.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Middle East continues to experience systematic and multilevel instability. The conflicts and crises in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq are ongoing.

Major agreements, such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme, which we consider to be an example of constructive multilateral cooperation, are under threat. We are concerned by the growing tensions in the Persian Gulf, not only involving Iran, but also among Arab States.

Russia is an active proponent of unity within Arab States. The upcoming victory in Syria and Iraq over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in no way guarantees that the threat of terrorism will be eliminated in the near future. We cannot forget that extremists, using ethnicity and religion to sow discord, have created a fertile breeding ground for swelling their ranks for a long time to come. Concerted efforts on the part of the international community are needed to properly respond to terrorist threats. Unfortunately, the formation of a global anti-terrorist coalition under the auspices of the United Nations — a proposal put forward by the President of the Russian Federation in 2015 — has yet to be established.

The stagnating situation in the Middle East and North Africa reflects the importance of developing coordinated approaches to settle acute crises in the region. In that regard, the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, to convene a comprehensive review of the crisis situation in the Middle East remains relevant.

With respect to solving the crises in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, Russia has continuously asserted that the solution can be reached only through a political and diplomatic process based on inclusive national dialogue. We will continue to work with the opposing sides in acute conflict situations, but will not impose foreign, ready-made solutions on them. We must bridge the chasm of misunderstanding and restore the prospect of a peaceful settlement.

We are convinced that success in combating terrorism will pave the way towards achieving a long-term political settlement in Syria. Such a settlement must be implemented within the framework of the Geneva process under the auspices of the United Nations on the basis of fulfilling all of the provisions set forth by Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). We believe that recent events, including the statements made by the Presidents of Russia and the United States in Da Nang, the trilateral meeting of the Presidents of Russia, Turkey and Iran in Sochi on 22 November, the conference to unify the Syrian opposition in Riyadh and

the preparation for a Syrian national dialogue congress are aimed at renewing intra-Syrian talks in Geneva.

We call for the early resumption of the political process in Yemen, as well as the establishment of an effective format of external support for the settlement of the crisis. It is necessary to provide and increase humanitarian assistance to the people of the country, which is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe.

We would like to emphasize that new challenges and threats in the Middle East and North Africa should not overshadow the priority of solving the Palestine question, which remains fundamental to the long-term normalization of the situation in the region. The persistent impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a cause of deep concern for us. The lack of a peace process is raising tensions that could lead to an explosion at any moment.

We stress our commitment to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East based on a solid international legal framework providing for a two-State solution, including relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Russia calls for the need to increase international efforts aimed at seeking a way out of the deadlock in the Middle East. As a permanent member of the Security Council and a participant in the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, we take a principled position in support of the legitimate right of Palestinians to self-determination. We support the active involvement of regional players, in particular Egypt and Jordan, and confirm our willingness to host a summit in Russia between the leaders of Palestine and Israel.

We note the emerging positive developments in inter-Palestinian affairs. The agreement reached between Fatah and Hamas through the active engagement of Egypt on expanding the scope of the Palestinian Authority's power to include Gaza will help to fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a sovereign State. We will continue to support the strengthening of a unified Palestinian people.

We have no hidden agenda in the Middle East. We have historically friendly relations with all countries in the region. Russia will continue to pursue a consistent and transparent policy so as to find a solution to the crisis. This is our principled position.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17 will be taken after we have taken action on draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16, which were submitted under agenda item 38.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Draft resolutions (A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before the Assembly takes action on the draft resolutions one by one, members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on all four draft resolutions either before or after action is taken on all draft resolutions.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16.

Before giving the floor to delegations in explanations of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Meitzad (Israel): This explanation of vote refers to all the draft resolutions under agenda items 37 and 38.

On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which called for the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States living side by side. The State of Israel accepted the resolution, and the Arab world rejected it. The Arabs wasted no time; their relentless violence broke out immediately. A few months later, just one day after Israel declared its independence, on 15 May 1948, a coalition of Arab armies invaded Israel from all sides. Their goal was simple: to destroy the newly established Jewish State.

Yesterday, 29 November 2017, marked the seventieth anniversary of that crucial United Nations resolution. It should have been a day of celebration, but once again it was the exact opposite. Year after year, this historic date becomes an annual Israel-bashing session. Some countries still refuse, 70 years later, to accept the existence of the State of Israel in the Middle East. The Assembly heard representatives of many of

them speak yesterday and today, and while they may try to hide, twist or alter their true position, we cannot be fooled.

We are living at a time where many crises are raging across the Middle East and around the world. We, the States Members of the United Nations, have so many responsibilities and so many important decisions to make. Yet the United Nations still adopts biased resolutions and devotes precious resources to politicized bodies whose sole purpose is to attack and denounce Israel. It is absurd. In fact, it is truly a shame.

One of those bodies is the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It does nothing but spread a one-sided political narrative — one that does nothing for peace — and it uses the Member States' money to do so. This is the Committee that organized, in June 2017, the so-called United Nations Forum to Mark Fifty Years of Occupation. The Division for Palestinian Rights supports the Committee and invited several organizations and speakers with clear and publicly recognized ties to terrorism to participate in the event. Let me repeat that: a body of the Secretariat provided a platform for public supporters and glorifiers of and participants in terrorism. This is not only a bad use of our time; it is completely against our values. It is truly disturbing and shameful.

That is not all. The Division for Palestinian Rights is the only office of the Secretariat promoting an agenda that directly targets one Member State. It fills 15 paid positions to do so. Not only that, but large portions of the funding for the Division cover business-class airline tickets so that participants in its anti-Israel events can travel anywhere in the world to attend. This type of division and funding at the United Nations is truly unparalleled — especially as the Department of Political Affairs struggles to tackle its endless responsibilities with limited manpower and funding.

I turn now to another piece of this problematic puzzle. The special information programme on the question of Palestine, led by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), organizes an annual seminar on peace in the Middle East. We must not be misled by its name; the seminar has nothing to do with peace, but everything to do with anti-Israel sentiment and does little to promote dialogue and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. One of the programme's main responsibilities is to provide

training for Palestinian journalists. As some of members of the General Assembly may know, 2017 has not been a good year for Palestinian journalists.

In the Gaza strip, as revealed in the report of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, entitled “Gaza Ten Years Later”, Hamas engages in the widespread detention and abuse of journalists. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority instituted the so-called electronic crimes law earlier this year. It enables the Palestinian Authority to arrest and arbitrarily detain journalists and activists. Some people might expect that the DPI would raise its voice against such a troubling situation, but it does not. It focuses on targeting Israel. It is another example of a United Nations body that does not do its part to remain impartial.

The evidence is clear. It is truly baffling that the United Nations spends almost \$6.5 million of its budget on entities and bodies that do nothing but try to isolate Israel. Not only are they one-sided, but they are dangerous, as they give the floor to those who work against a peaceful solution. With its budget facing a severe deficit, it is not only unwise of the United Nations to fund these entities, but it is also wrong.

The problem does not end with the allocation of United Nations funding. The problem continues with the draft resolutions on which we will vote today.

Two of these draft resolutions make reference to the Temple Mount, a sacred place for all three Abrahamic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Yet these draft resolutions have deliberately omitted any mention of the Jewish or Christian connections to the Temple Mount or, as we call it in Hebrew, *Har Habayit*. This omission was deliberate. It shows yet another instance of the Palestinians’ refusal to recognize the proven historical connection between Judaism, Christianity, the Temple Mount and Jerusalem as a whole.

The international community must stop participating in such a blatant denial of history. It must not permit these blunt attempts to delegitimize Israel. As I mentioned, we are commemorating 70 years since the historic adoption of resolution 181 (II), the resolution through which the United Nations called for the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and paved the way for the establishment of the State of Israel.

Today, we will vote on draft resolution A/72/L.15, entitled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable

Rights of the Palestinian People.” This draft resolution refers to the establishment of the State of Israel as a *Nakba* or “catastrophe”. It calls Israel’s establishment a catastrophe. Let me be clear to all who wish to support the two-State-for-two-peoples solution that calling the establishment of Israel a catastrophe is not a statement of solidarity with the Palestinians. It is in fact a denial of Israel’s right to exist.

As for draft resolution A/72/L.17, entitled “The Syrian Golan”, the situation in Syria is in fact dire. The Syrian regime is systematically killing its own people, and has even used chemical weapons against them. At the same time, Israel is taking care of thousands of injured Syrians in our own hospitals, free of charge. And yet, despite the realities on the ground, at the General Assembly, absurdity prevails. As for the comments of the representative of the regime who spoke earlier, that is yet another example of the level of absurdity that this Hall can sometime reach.

The reality is as follows: the six draft resolutions put forward today pose a serious problem. They offer a one-sided account of the situation in our region and perpetuate a zero-sum approach to the conflict. They send a message that says that a Member State can support the Palestinians only by shaming and targeting Israel. They do nothing but support the outrageous bodies that abuse the United Nations budget and pull us further away from peace. Supporting these draft resolutions will neither advance nor inspire peace. For all who truly seek to help the Israeli-Palestinian cause, I call on them to take a stand, make the right choice and vote against these biased draft resolutions.

Mr. Erdman (United States of America): I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to present our principled concerns about the draft resolutions before us today.

As we have continued to make clear, the United States opposes the annual submission of a disproportionate number of unfair draft resolutions of the General Assembly that are biased against Israel. This one-sided approach damages the prospects for peace by undermining trust between parties and by failing to create the kind of international environment critical to achieving peace. We are disappointed that despite supposed support for reform, Member States continue to single out Israel with these draft resolutions. This year, the United States voted against 18 draft resolutions that were biased against Israel. As we have

repeatedly made clear, this dynamic is unacceptable. It is inappropriate that the United Nations, an institution founded upon the idea that all nations should be treated equally, should be so often used by Member States to treat another State so unequally.

The United States will therefore vote against these one-sided draft resolutions. We encourage other nations to do so as well. We are especially concerned today with those texts that renew mandates of counterproductive special committees that waste valuable United Nations resources. Of these annual draft resolutions, three United Nations bodies in particular reflect the bias, redundancy and unnecessary cost of such draft resolutions: the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. These bodies waste limited United Nations resources, costing approximately \$6.1 million in 2015. But they do nothing to contribute to peace in the region. Rather, they perpetuate the perception of an inherent United Nations bias against Israel.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the United States has consistently opposed every effort to delegitimize Israel or to undermine its security at the United Nations. We will continue to do so with vigour. That said, the United States remains firmly committed to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. Our Government is actively engaged with Israelis and Palestinians to help them negotiate a conflict-ending peace agreement that can help introduce a positive new dynamic in the region. Biased draft resolutions do not help to advance peace. Draft resolutions such as those that will be passed here today only distract from the process. The cause of peace will be served only when the bias against Israel in the General Assembly of the United Nations comes to an end.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/72/L.13, A/72/L.14, A/72/L.15 and A/72/L.16.

We turn first to draft resolution A/72/L.13, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". I

inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/72/L.13, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Comoros, Djibouti, The Gambia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Solomon Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/72/L.13 was adopted by 100 votes to 10, with 59 abstentions (resolution 72/11).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Qatar informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We turn next to draft resolution A/72/L.14, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat". I inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those listed in document A/72/L.14, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, The Gambia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Solomon Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Honduras, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Togo, Tonga

Draft resolution A/72/L.14 was adopted by 155 votes to 8, with 8 abstentions (resolution 72/12).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Qatar informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We now turn to draft resolution A/72/L.15, entitled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People”. I inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those listed in document A/72/L.15, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, The Gambia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam and Yemen.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra

Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Solomon Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Draft resolution A/72/L.15 was adopted by 103 votes to 10, with 57 abstentions (resolution 72/13).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We turn next to draft resolution A/72/L.16, entitled “Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine”. I inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those listed in document A/72/L.16, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Saudi

Arabia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Solomon Islands, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Fiji, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Tonga

Draft resolution A/72/L.16 was adopted by 157 votes to 7, with 8 abstentions (resolution 72/14).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to delegations in explanations of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Lind (Estonia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The EU wishes to thank the Palestinian delegation for the successful outcome of our negotiations on a number of draft resolutions on which action has been taken by the General Assembly. As an outcome of those negotiations, the EU confirms its consolidated voting pattern on the draft resolutions.

At this time, we would like to put on record that with regard to all draft resolutions adopted during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the EU and its member States consider that whenever the Palestinian Government is mentioned, the reference is to the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, the use of the term "Palestine" in any of these draft resolutions cannot be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the member States on this issue and hence on the question of the validity of an accession to the conventions and treaties mentioned therein. We also point out that the EU as a whole has not expressed a legal qualification with regard to the term "forced displacement" — used in a number of draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 38 and 54.

Some of the resolutions adopted today refer to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The EU is concerned at the worrying developments and recurrent violent clashes at the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and respecting Jordan's special role.

The EU recalls that its position with respect to those resolutions does not imply a change of its stance on the terminology concerning the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The EU stresses the need for language on the holy sites of Jerusalem to reflect the importance and historical significance of the holy sites for the three monotheistic religions and to respect religious and cultural sensitivities. The future choice of language may affect the EU's collective support for the draft resolutions according to the established voting pattern.

Mr. Mazzeo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to give an explanation of vote on resolution 72/11, concerning the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, on which Argentina abstained.

Argentina recognizes the contribution of the United Nations system to raising awareness about the rights of the Palestinian people and with regard to the need to reach a peaceful solution to the Palestine question, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. However, Argentina believes it is time for an evaluation to decide what the appropriate allocation of resources for the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat should be.

This vote should not be interpreted as a change in the traditional position of Argentina's principles on the matter. Argentina wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestine people to self-determination and an independent and viable State. In this regard, on 6 December 2010, the Argentinian Government recognized Palestine as a free and independent State within the existing 1967 borders and in line with the decisions made by the parties during the negotiation process.

Argentina's decision to recognize the Palestinian State is part of our authority's desire to facilitate the negotiation process between Israel and Palestine so as to lead to the end of the conflict. This is driven by a deep desire to see all people living in peaceful coexistence, which is the strong belief of all Argentinians. Argentina ratifies its irrevocable position in favour of Israel's right to be recognized by all and live in peace and security within its borders.

Mr. Teo (Singapore): I have the honour to speak in explanation of vote after the adoption of resolutions 72/11, 72/12, 72/13 and 72/14.

Singapore voted in favour of resolution 72/13, entitled "Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the

Palestinian People", on the understanding that the reference in paragraph 2 to the "achievement ... of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders" should be interpreted to mean what is set out in paragraph 1 of resolution 72/14 on "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", namely, "the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders ...".

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolutions (A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17.

Members are reminded that they will have an opportunity to explain their vote on the two draft resolutions either before or after action is taken on both draft resolutions.

The Assembly will now take action on draft resolutions A/72/L.11 and A/72/L.17.

We turn first to draft resolution A/72/L.11, entitled "Jerusalem".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/72/L.11, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, the Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Mozambique, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, United States of America

Abstaining:

Australia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Honduras, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, South Sudan, Togo

Draft resolution A/72/L.11 was adopted by 151 votes to 6, with 10 abstentions (resolution 72/15).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Djibouti informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of Guatemala informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We now turn to draft resolution A/72/L.17, entitled "The Syrian Golan". I inform the Assembly that the draft resolution is closed for sponsorship on the e-sponsorship platform.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those listed in document A/71/L.17, the following countries have become sponsors: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay,

Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Ukraine

Draft resolution A/72/L.17 was adopted by 105 votes to 6, with 58 abstentions (resolution 72/16).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mazzeo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the delegations of Argentina and Brazil to explain our votes on the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan, which the General Assembly has just adopted (resolution 72/16). Brazil and Argentina voted in favour of the resolution, as we believe that its essential character is linked to the illegality of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use or the threat of use of force against the territory or territorial integrity of a State.

I would also like to make clear our delegations' position with respect to paragraph 6 of the resolution. Our vote does not does not prejudice the content of the paragraph, in particular the reference to the line of 4 June 1967. Argentina and Brazil believe that it is important to make progress towards a solution to the Syria and Israeli aspect of the conflict in the Middle

East in order to bring to an end the occupation of the Golan Heights. Therefore, on behalf of the Governments of Argentina and Brazil, I would once again stress the importance of resuming negotiations in order to find a definitive solution to the situation in the Syrian Golan, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to express its deepest gratitude to the General Assembly for having once again adopted, as it has done without any interruption since 1981, the resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan" (resolution 72/16) and the other resolutions on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East (resolutions 72/14 and 72/15).

On behalf of my country, Syria, I reiterate our thanks to all those countries that sponsored the resolution on the Syrian Golan and those that voted in favour of it. The majority of States Members of the United Nations support the resolution, which shows their commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their rejection of foreign occupation. It also shows their support for our right to recover every inch of our territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The overwhelming majority of States supporting the resolutions sends a clear and international message to Israel that its policies of occupation, killing, expansion, aggression, racial discrimination and settlements and the imposition of the status quo and annexation of territories by force represent violations of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and the 1949 Geneva Convention, and are practices rejected by international community. All such practices have been condemned by all those who are committed to promoting international law, ending foreign occupation, rejecting the annexation of territory by force, and punishing those who violate these core principles.

The representative of the Israeli occupation made, as usual, false accusations against my country. She claimed that Israel, the occupying Power, has provided medical care to people whom she called Syrian citizens. However, they are in fact Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra terrorists. According to top Israeli leaders, Israel has treated and is treating thousands of them in its hospitals. I shall be brief and say only that the adoptions today by an absolute majority of the resolution on the Syrian Golan and the other resolutions are the best response to

the lies that we have heard here from the representative of Israel.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to explain the United Kingdom's vote on the resolution entitled "The Syrian Golan" (resolution 72/16).

The United Kingdom continues to believe that a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue, and the United Kingdom has been pleased, along with our European Union partners, to support resolutions introduced by the Palestinian delegation at the General Assembly. The United Kingdom is committed to continuing to work with the international community to achieve a two-State solution and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

It is in all our interests to strengthen the rules-based international system. We have voted in favour of four resolutions that we believe will bring us closer to our aim of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Those balanced resolutions call out the growth in illegal settlement activity, as well as terrorism, incitement and violence. They also call on both sides to take responsibility for human rights violations.

We will continue to push back against actions that make peace harder to achieve, but resolutions that undermine the credibility of United Nations bodies risk hardening positions on both sides and do little to

advance peace or mutual understanding. That is why we have voted against resolution 72/16, which was proposed by the Syrian regime, on the occupation of Syria's Golan.

We consider the Golan Heights, along with East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, as occupied territory, and we do not recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan. We continue to call on Israel, as the occupying Power, and all actors, to uphold their obligations under international law to promote peace, stability and security. That is why we voted in favour of the Palestinian-sponsored draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan.

But resolution 72/16, on the Golan Heights, proposed by the Syrian regime, repeats much of the same language and adds nothing new. It is unnecessary and disproportionate. The Syrian regime's intent is to use this additional resolution to deflect attention from its own criminal actions and indiscriminate slaughter of its own citizens. The duty of the General Assembly is to draw attention to international humanitarian law violations wherever they occur. This resolution risks discrediting that vital responsibility.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.