



# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM

*“The Question of Jerusalem after 50 years of Occupation and 25 years of the Oslo Accords”*

Rabat, 26 - 28 June 2018

---

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

## OPENING SESSION

Statement by

**Mr. Miroslav Jenča**

Assistant Secretary-General to the United Nations  
Department of Political Affairs

Representative of the United Nations

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I am attending this International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, organised by the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People with the support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, here in Rabat.

The Committee has worked tirelessly to help realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – including their right to self-determination. You have been a leading voice in supporting the achievement of a two-State solution able to end the Israeli occupation.

The Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat is providing our full support to these endeavours – through the Division for Palestinian Rights that serves as the secretariat of the Committee and implements the Committee activities, including this Conference; through our liaison with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, and his Office in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Gaza; and through our support to the good offices of the Secretary-General himself as part of the Middle East Quartet.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all too aware of the difficulties of the current situation. Gaza, suffering from years of violence and closures, is on the brink of a humanitarian collapse. Special Envoy Mladenov has been working with pertinent actors on a UN strategy for Gaza, which would tackle critical areas like housing; the provision of electricity, gas and water; sewage treatment; and others. We hope that this plan will receive the full and sustained support of the parties and the international community.

Ongoing settlement construction and expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem is a major obstacle to peace. It is illegal under UN resolutions and international law and must be halted and reversed.

Nowhere, however, is the situation more critical than in Jerusalem. Of all the parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory – namely Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem – the latter is the place with symbolic meaning far beyond Palestine and Israel, even far beyond the wider Middle East region.

As the Secretary-General has stated, “Jerusalem is a final status issue that must be resolved through direct negotiations between the two parties on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, taking into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. It is only by realizing the vision of two states living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.”

Recent developments in Jerusalem, taken against the international consensus and resolutions of the UN Security Council, risk to embolden antagonistic voices on both sides and to further weaken any hopes to reach a peaceful and sustainable solution. Therefore, today it is more important than ever to take effective concerted action, as decades of convergence and global consensus are eroding.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against this background, it is meetings like today’s conference on Jerusalem, which includes a focus on how the international community can and does provide support to the Palestinian youth in the city, that give hope. For while we will hear about the difficulties of the situation on the ground and recent developments in the wider arena, we will also hear about ways forward – from civil society, from Member States and inter-governmental organisations.

Among the latter, the United Nations plays our part, on the political level through the efforts of the Special Envoy and on the development and humanitarian level through the combined efforts of UN Agencies, Programmes and Funds working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in East Jerusalem.

This work is done in cooperation with our partners – the State of Palestine, civil society and the international community. In this effort, we are always seeking their counsel, seeking new ideas, for example in such fora as this Conference.

In this spirit, I am looking forward to the panels of the coming two days and wish all of us a good meeting.

Thank you

\*\*\*