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

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 January 2014)

Mr. President,

I would first like to congratulate Jordan on the manner in which it leads the work of the Council this month. Also allow me to thank H.R.H. Prince Zeid for his distinguished presence and presentation on behalf of the Council at the first meeting in 2014 of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, held last week.

Allow me, as well, to recognize the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question.

Mr. President,

Our Committee is grateful for the continued diplomatic engagement by the international community, primarily the persistent efforts of US Secretary of State Kerry, to encourage the parties to reach a comprehensive agreement. The Committee calls on all parties to act responsibly to create an appropriate climate for productive negotiations, which will resolve all final status issues and bring about an end to the Israeli occupation, a total Israeli military withdrawal from the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination.

As we approach the April deadline, however, the prospects continue to be undermined by Israel's actions on the ground, in particular the expansion of settlements. Israel announced thousands of new settlement units since the start of negotiations in July, the latest of which was

more than 1,400 units announced 10 days ago. The 144 settlements, scattered throughout the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem and connected with each other by roads built for the exclusive use of Israeli settlers, are totally inconsistent with the two-State solution. Their continued expansion undermines the Palestinians' trust in Israel's seriousness on achieving it. Peace will only be possible when the occupation is brought to an end and the State of Palestine is truly independent, sovereign and viable.

Moreover, settlement activities constitute grave breaches under international law. The Committee calls on the Council, the guarantor of international peace and security, to uphold international law, and its own resolutions, including Security Council resolution 446 (1979) that determined that settlements have no legal validity calling on Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The Committee is also troubled by the recent tensions on the border between Gaza and Israel, by the rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and the Israeli air strikes on Gaza, all of which could undermine the fragile ceasefire between the two sides with devastating consequences for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly has proclaimed 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and requested the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to organize activities in cooperation with Governments, United Nations organizations, intergovernmental organizations and civil society. The objective of the International Year, which was officially launched last Thursday at a meeting of the Committee, is to promote solidarity with the Palestinian people as a central theme, contributing to international awareness of the question of Palestine and obstacles to the ongoing peace process, including illegal settlements. A wide range of activities are currently being organized, and we count on the entire Membership, including Council Members, for their cooperation and engagement to make 2014 a historic year for the long-overdue two-State solution.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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