

Check against delivery

**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, 23 July 2013)

Mme. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on the manner in which you lead the work of the Council this month. Let me also thank Special Coordinator Robert Serry for the comprehensive briefing.

Mme. President,

The volatile regional environment should not deflect our attention from the Israeli-Palestinian track. Finding a durable and just solution to this conflict is no less important. The relative calm so far could presage further turbulence.

We welcome the announcement in Amman that the basis has been established to resume talks between Israel and Palestine. Our Committee appreciates the active diplomacy of Secretary of State Kerry, supported by the Arab League follow-up committee, and many world leaders. It is important that the close engagement of the international community be sustained, to make sure the parties live up to their commitments, negotiate in good faith, and refrain from steps which can jeopardise negotiations.

Just last month our Committee convened an International Meeting on Israeli-Palestinian Peace in Beijing. The high turnout and extensive media coverage it received speaks to the high priority the international community accords to this issue. Our Committee sincerely thanks the Chinese Government for hosting this event, and the Chinese experts for their active participation.

The need to redouble long-standing efforts to reach a negotiated two-State solution was stressed by participants. Speakers strongly supported the renewed engagement of the United States and the energetic diplomacy of Secretary of State Kerry, which should be given a chance to succeed. They expressed appreciation for China's efforts and initiatives, and for the revitalized role of the Arab League. They warned however that other key stakeholder such as this Council and the Quartet remained on the sidelines. They were also deeply troubled by the refusal by Israel to abide by its legal obligation to stop all settlement activities, to commit to 1967 borders and release prisoners, which continued to block progress.

Mme President,

Let me recall that July marked the 9 year anniversary of the ICJ advisory opinion, which reaffirmed the illegality of all settlements and called on Israel to dismantle its separation wall and compensate for all damage. It has been 34 years since the adoption of Council resolution 446 (1979), which called on Israel to stop transferring settlers to occupied territories. Both remain unimplemented. The construction of the wall continues, causing great humanitarian hardship. The first quarter of 2013 saw an alarming rise in settlement activity compared to 2012.

The recent European Commission's directive which bans EU funding for Israeli projects in settlements is a welcome first, and hopefully not the last, concrete measure against settlements. It sends a strong message that the patience of the international community with Israeli settlements has run out. The Israeli leadership should be paying attention, and acting wisely if irreparable damage to negotiations is to be avoided.

Mme President,

Our Committee will continue to remind the United Nations Member States of their obligation to ensure Israeli compliance with international law. We will keep calling for the lifting of the Gaza siege in line with resolution 1860 (2009). We hope that despite the regional upheavals the Palestinians will stay focused on reconciliation, without which there can be no two-State solution, as the deadline for a unity Government and setting a date for elections is approaching. We will continue to mobilize assistance for Palestinian State institutions. You can count on our Committee's full support for all efforts to re-launch good faith negotiations.

Thank you for your attention.

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