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**Statement delivered on behalf of the
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
at the Special Meeting in observance of the
International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
At UN Office in Vienna
29 November 2019**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we gather, once more, to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and to express our commitment to fully implement resolution 181, adopted seventy-two years ago on 29 November 1947, when the General Assembly decided to partition Mandate Palestine into two sovereign adjoining States.

Despite this resolution, only one State saw the light while the other is yet to gain full independence and sovereignty. It is indeed discouraging that we must still gather every year to remind the world that the promise of the United Nations remains unfulfilled.

The Palestinian people have endured 52 years of an illegal occupation which denies their inalienable right to self-determination, statehood and

independence, and millions of Palestinians still endure dispossession and exile as the right of return of the Palestine refugees too continues to be denied.

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli settlement expansion continues unabated in defiance of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016). The occupying Power must cease all illegal settlement activities in compliance with its legal obligations under international law, including the 4th Geneva Convention and the relevant resolutions. Member States also must comply with operative paragraph 5 of Resolution 2334 requiring them to distinguish, in their dealings, between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as recently reaffirmed by the Court of Justice of the European Union, and must exert additional efforts as High Contracting Parties to the 4th Geneva Convention to ensure respect of the Convention in all circumstances, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Of late, Israeli politicians have openly declared their intention to annex occupied Palestinian territory, a move which the international community must firmly reject as it is contrary to international law and violating UN resolutions.

Meanwhile, entire Palestinian families see their homes demolished and their lives crippled by restrictions of movement in their own land, imposed through excessive use of force, including lethal force and including against children.

The Palestinian civilian population in Gaza is living under the twelfth year of an illegal blockade in dire humanitarian conditions stifling their lives and economic growth, leading hundreds of young Palestinians to protest the

denial of their basic human rights and rising despair at the fence with Israel, in many cases finding death in the process as the occupying forces continue to fire live ammunition against unarmed civilian protesters.

Palestinians in Gaza live surrounded by destroyed buildings that are reminders of the too many conflicts they have endured, like the one they witnessed just a few weeks ago. This senseless cycle of violence must stop. We call on all Parties to end all forms of incitement, provocation and violence against civilians, including women and children, and to exercise maximum restraint.

It is important that the recent cease-fire reached between Israel and the Islamic Jihad be respected in order to protect civilian lives. In this regard, we commend the efforts undertaken by Egypt and the United Nations to restore calm and promote Palestinian reconciliation.

On this Day of Solidarity, we also remember the Palestine refugees who wish, one day, to return home in accordance with their right - enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as affirmed by the General Assembly in resolution 194 (III) and dozens of resolutions thereafter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me express the Committee's satisfaction for the overwhelming vote held on 15 November renewing the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was a resounding reaffirmation of support for the vital work of the Agency, as well as solidarity for Palestine refugees.

The vote exemplified not only the need for UNRWA's critical services to 5.3 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Occupied Palestinian Territory contributing to their development, protection and to stability in the region, but also sent a clear message in support of multilateralism.

Moreover, a just resolution of Jerusalem as a final status issue must ensure respect for the City as a place where the three monotheistic religions coexist and must ensure the protection of the historic status quo at the holy sites.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Palestinian people don't need only sympathy with their plight and solidarity with their just cause, but real political support and credible political prospects for the independence of their State. They need real partners ready to implement what the General Assembly and the Security Council have affirmed countless times since the passing of resolution 181 and ready to support the realization of their inalienable rights.

We must not forget that despite conflicts, deep mistrust between the parties, unhelpful unilateral measures and disrespect for relevant UN resolutions and international law, the goal we pursue has remained the same: it is that of a just and lasting solution of two States living side by side in peace and security within the pre-1967 borders, and with East-Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine.

The respect for human rights, human dignity and our pursuit of justice in supporting the Palestinian people to enjoy those same rights emanate from our unshaken belief in the principles of the UN Charter.

Many voices throughout time, and many countries, have spoken up to denounce this historical injustice, proving the depth of this solidarity and its universal span. Our Committee was established over 40 years ago by the General Assembly precisely as an expression of this collective responsibility.

We will continue to pursue its mandate and will not allow the Palestine question to be forgotten until the day we see the full realization of the inalienable rights of self-determination and independence of the Palestinian people and two neighbouring States living side by side in peace and security.

In spite all the forces hampering this outcome, that day will arrive, and then we will celebrate the just peace achieved for the benefit of Palestinians and all the peoples of the entire region.

Thank you.