

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF  
PALESTINE**

*Southeast Asian Support for the Rights of the Palestinian People*

**Kuala Lumpur, 28-29 February 2020**

**Opening Session**

**Friday, 28 February 2020**

**3.30 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.**

**CHAIR STATEMENT**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to represent our Committee today in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia has been a longstanding Member of the Committee, and always played a strong role in our common cause to advocate and work for the realisation of the rights of the Palestinian People.

Two other Southeast Asian nations are also Members of the Committee – Indonesia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic – and another nation, Viet Nam, is an observer. The peoples of this region have a long-standing, principled support for the quest of the Palestinian people to be free from oppression and occupation. The reason for this support is similar to the support for Palestine in other nations of the Global South: We all have a shared history of oppression and occupation. We all went through hard struggles to free ourselves and our nations and gain our independence and sovereignty.

This is at the heart of the Question of Palestine: a just solution that would allow both peoples in the territory – Israelis and Palestinians – to live in their own, sovereign states side-by-side in peace and prosperity.

The path to achieve this goal is clear: the establishment of two States – Israel and Palestine – based on relevant UN resolutions and international agreements, with borders based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

If the solution is clear, and if the path is clear, then why haven't we achieved it yet?

The occupation prevents a just solution of the Question of Palestine because it profits from the injustice of today's reality, and cements a system of exploitation, expropriation and annexation. Pro-occupation lobbies in the international arena, among them in North America, Europe and Australia try to change the image of the conflict from one state's occupation and illegal settling of Palestinian land to one where it is a conflict over 'disputed territory' to which both sides have equal claims. Such a system operates under the principle that "might makes right", that "creating facts on the ground" would help legalise the illegitimate. And that, over time, the international community will tire of the conflict and give up.

But we must not tire. We must not give up. We must continue to stand united. As one of the great leaders of my continent, Nelson

Mandela, once said: “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

It is for this reason that our Committee is organising events like this one around the world, to advocate for support for the Palestinian people in their just quest. We are organising today’s and tomorrow’s conference to inform about the realities on the ground, and to garner your support. For example, almost all ASEAN countries have recognised the State of Palestine; we ask for your support to convince those who have not done yet to do so as well. All of you have good relationships with Australia, with the European nations; we ask for your support to convince them to engage more actively in establishing a multilateral mechanism for negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

In our efforts, we have to appeal to all progressive forces. Many are painting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an ethnic or a religious conflict, or a conflict between civilisations, where one is born into one side and has to fight the other. It is not. It is a conflict between those who are on the side of truth and justice, and those who are benefiting from false narratives and oppression.

There are many, many Israelis – Christians, Jews and Muslims – who are also seeking a positive way forward, towards a just solution,

with freedom and dignity for all. They are allies, partners, brothers and sisters. We wish that they could be here with us, to appeal for a just resolution of this long-standing conflict.

But it is important that I mention and recognise them. The worst thing we could do is to fall into the trap of stereotyping and closing our ranks. No, our hands are stretched out and our ears open to all. Because, as your great independence leader Tunku Abdul Rahman said: “Our future depends on how well many different kinds of people can live and work together.”