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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

409th meeting

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New York

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

The Chair: This is a special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly; His Excellency Mr. Harold Adlai Agyeman, President of the Security Council; His Excellency Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet, representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and representative of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at this meeting.

I would also like to welcome the representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society organizations and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this special meeting. Our special thanks go to Mr. Shawan Jabarin, General Director of Al-Haq, who has kindly accepted the Committee's invitation to deliver a virtual message as a representative of civil society.

Allow me to remind the Committee that this meeting is being webcast live on United Nations Web

TV, with simultaneous interpretation in all six official languages. I would like to urge all speakers to keep their statements within five minutes. Some of the dignitaries may have to leave the meeting at the end of its first segment.

Allow me to now make a statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee.

This special and solemn meeting, held each year on 29 November under the provisions of resolution 32/40 B, of 2 December 1977, observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The meeting is an expression of our collective commitment to the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace and security, in accordance with all the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Regrettably today, in the absence of a just solution 75 years since the General Assembly's decision to partition historic Palestine through the adoption of resolution 181 (II) and the prolongation of Israel's occupation for more than 55 years now, the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees, continue to experience increasing levels of dispossession, displacement, violence, human rights violations and insecurity. The promise of self-determination and independence and the realization of Palestinian people's rights remain unfulfilled.

In 2022 we have witnessed a dangerous escalation in Israeli military raids across the occupied West

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Bank, including East Jerusalem, leading to the killing and injuring of more civilians, including women and children. Violence, in whatever form, takes us further away from the international consensus to achieve a just peace in the Middle East, as outlined in international law and countless United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Such violence is not the answer. The killing of civilians must stop immediately, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. The global consensus is clear that the provocative rhetoric and actions by Israel, especially with regard to the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites, which greatly inflame tensions, must end.

The ongoing expansion by Israel, the occupying Power, of illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the attendant settler violence, which is also on the rise, require decisive action. Those illegal actions constitute grave breaches of international law and are a flagrant obstruction of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The Committee is also gravely concerned that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land is not temporary, but is in fact a creeping annexation, as argued by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and countless others. We are dismayed by the grave discriminatory policies and measures imposed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Israel must reverse the dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians, as well as the transfer of its population to occupied land.

The Committee condemns Israel's relentless targeting and shrinking of Palestinian civil society space, including its baseless decision to outlaw six Palestinian civil society organizations that are partners to the United Nations and the Committee.

Israel must also fully lift its 15-year illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip, which constitutes collective punishment, as affirmed by Special Rapporteurs and commissions of inquiry, and which serves to further fragment the Palestinian people and its territory. Israel's actions are the source of countless human rights violations and are leading to the de-development of Gaza. The land, air and sea blockade run contrary to peace and international law and must be brought to an end.

Even though the promise of the United Nations remains unfulfilled, the Palestinian people have shown incredible resilience over the years, never losing their convictions, hope and identity. Over the years, against formidable odds, Palestine became an observer State to the United Nations and a member of international organizations and ratified some 100 international treaties and conventions.

On Friday, 11 November 2022, the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly recommended five draft resolutions regarding the Palestine refugees and Israeli settlement activities and other practices violating the rights of the Palestinian people, including an important request for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice regarding, *inter alia*, the legality of Israel's prolonged occupation (draft resolutions A/C.4/77/L.9, A/C.4/77/L.10, A/C.4/77/L.11, A/C.4/77/L.12/Rev.1 and A/C.4/77/L.14).

Within those resolutions was also the important extension of the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. However, the Agency still needs sustainable and predictable funding, and the Committee continues to strongly appeal for the necessary support to the Agency to ensure the well-being and dignity of the Palestine refugees.

The Committee will tirelessly continue to serve as a torchbearer until we reach a comprehensive solution based on international law, whereby Palestine and Israel live side by side along the pre-1967 lines in peace and security. The Committee notes that the ever-deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory calls for a political process based on United Nations resolutions, international law and existing agreements that will resolve all final-status issues and achieve the two-State solution. To that end, the Committee continues its targeted outreach with Member States and regional organizations to sustain international attention on the question of Palestine, as well as to advocate for the two-State solution.

We welcome the intra-Palestinian dialogue and the signing, on 13 October, of the Declaration of Algiers, which is a step towards reconciliation and Palestinian democracy, crucial to peace negotiations.

Finding a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine requires an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, the realization of the self-determination and independence of the Palestinian people and a just

solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees. That is a prerequisite for peace between Palestinians and Israelis and for regional peace and stability. On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Committee vows to continue to uphold its mandate and work to that end until its realization.

I now have the honour to give the floor to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Kőrösi.

Mr. Kőrösi (President of the General Assembly): Seventy-five years ago, the situation in Palestine was the first major crisis to be faced by the newly established United Nations. It was the General Assembly that declared that a two-State solution would bring about a peaceful and sustainable end to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Members of this organ thought that they would soon see the two States living side by side in peace and security. Three quarters of a century later, that is, three generations later, after many wars, there are no two States and, as of yet, no lasting peace.

The world today faces many interlocked crises, with more looming on the horizon. The world is suffering from a lack of trust. We simply cannot revel in inaction. On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we must consider the Palestinians' plight through the lenses of rights and solidarity. I re-emphasize that the Palestinian people, like all people, have a fundamental and inalienable right to live in dignity, with liberty, the freedom of movement, freedom from fear and access to basic services.

In 1950, Ralph Bunche received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as the United Nations mediator in the Palestine conflict. He said:

"Peace is no mere matter of men fighting or not fighting. Peace ... must be translated into bread or rice, shelter, health and education, as well as freedom and human dignity — a steadily better life".

Living in the region as a young diplomat, I can say from personal experience that the tensions in that region were, and still are, very high. We must aspire to change that and to pioneer solutions. Members can pioneer solutions.

We know from experience that nothing drives insecurity and violence more than bleakness and despair. We must find a way to restore hope among Palestinians, especially the young generation, and to restore hope that all human beings are born equal and entitled to

enjoy the same human rights. Let them be citizens of Israel or not; let them live in the territories assigned by the partition resolution 181 (II) to Israel or Palestine; let them live in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Akko, Galilee, the West Bank or Gaza.

We must restore the hope that prosperity cannot be the result of a zero-sum game, but rather the outcome of a strategic endeavour based on a historic compromise, that the conflict will not continue forever, that the right to development belongs to all, that the political leadership will be able to cater for them and that there are solutions.

With what solutions will we therefore leave this Chamber? How, as the international community, are we going to ensure the protection of the rights of Palestinians now and for future generations? A fundamental element of solidarity is understanding the plight of others, walking a mile in their shoes. I ask those present today to walk a mile in the shoes of Palestinians. I ask them not only to stand in solidarity, but also to move so.

We must reaffirm our solidarity with the right of Palestinians to self-determination. We are still living with some preliminary structures designed to ease the difficulties of the first few years after the partition. For the time being, we still need them, not as a solution, but as arrangements before the solution is shaped, negotiated and implemented.

We must demonstrate such solidarity with concrete steps by providing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with the means that it needs to do its life-saving work. Unfortunately, UNRWA currently faces a funding gap of more than \$600 million, as was highlighted by the Chair. At a time when the political will to find long-term solutions seems low, let us at least ensure the sufficient and reliable multi-year funding of UNRWA to enable it to perform its tasks.

I appeal to all participants to use the leverage of their Governments to seek compromise, direct dialogue and good-faith negotiations in the Middle East. Those are the only tools at our disposal to end this conflict with a just and sustainable solution that takes into consideration the legitimate aspirations of all sides to it. As the saying goes, there is no way to peace; peace is the way. Our aim is ultimately to no longer need this call for solidarity. Our aim is to have a Middle East

free of conflict and able to fully utilize the enormous potential of its peoples.

The Chair: I thank His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly, for his powerful statement. The Committee thanks him for his stewardship of the Assembly in dealing with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the entire Middle East.

I now have the honour to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Harold Adlai Agyeman, Permanent Representative of Ghana and President of the Security Council.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana), President of the Security Council: I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council.

Thirty-one years ago, an international conference took place in Madrid, where, for the first time, Israeli leaders sat across the table from Arab leaders, including Palestinians, Lebanese, Jordanians and Syrians. That meeting marked the starting point of a series of bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations. The conference reminds us that a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can be achieved only by peaceful means. The support of the international community has been, and will continue to be, crucial to a sustainable peace settlement.

During the past year, the Security Council has remained seized of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Council has continued to receive monthly briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and to hold open debates on this agenda item on a quarterly basis. The Security Council convened additional meetings in response to the situation in Gaza and East Jerusalem. The Council also adopted a press statement on the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh (SC/14891). The Council has continued to receive the Secretary-General's reports on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) in briefings by the Special Coordinator every three months, as well as in written form every six months, the most recent one being yesterday (see S/PV.9203).

The situation in the Middle East remains a central concern of the Security Council, particularly regarding the lack of progress in finding a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The status quo is not sustainable, and significant steps to reverse negative trends on the ground are urgently needed.

The Security Council remains fully committed to pursuing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in line with international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and consistent with its relevant resolutions, which represent a cornerstone of peace and security in the region. That should be achieved through direct negotiations on final-status issues between the parties, leading to the achievement of a two-State solution, where two democratic States, Israel and a sovereign and independent Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, in line with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as taking into account the internationally agreed parameters.

Council members continue to be concerned by the deteriorating situation on the ground and to call for an immediate end to actions that undermine the trust between the parties and threaten the viability of a two-State solution. That includes settlement construction, the demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property, evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Masafer Yatta, settlers' attacks across the occupied Palestinian territory, incitement to violence and terrorism.

Members of the Security Council condemn the violence and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, both Israeli and Palestinian, and stress the importance of ensuring the protection of civilians. The Security Council continues to be concerned by the dire economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls on all relevant actors to take steps to improve it now and in the longer term and strengthen the ceasefire reached.

Council members stress the need to ensure full, unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza and call on the parties to actively work towards the sustained and regular opening of the crossing points. They welcome the efforts of Egypt, other countries of the region, the United Nations, the Middle East Quartet and other international partners in that regard and encourage progress towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the effective functioning of the Palestinian Authority,

including in the Gaza Strip. They take note of the signing of the Declaration of Algiers for Palestinian reconciliation under the auspices of Algeria, including with regard to holding legislative and parliamentary elections within an established time frame.

Moreover, the Security Council continues to carefully monitor the acute fiscal and financial situation faced by the Palestinian Authority and stresses the importance of addressing that situation, including providing support to efforts undertaken to strengthen its institutions. The Council welcomes the efforts of Member States and the donor group of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians for their support to the State-building endeavour of the Palestinians. The members of the Security Council also recognize the essential role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East plays, thanks to the lifeline support and provision of services for millions of refugees in the region. Similarly, Council members note the Agency's recurring funding crisis with great concern and thank donors for their timely contributions, while inviting others to contribute as well.

The Security Council will continue to closely follow the situation in the Middle East, including with regard to the Palestinian question, in order to pursue the implementation of its relevant resolutions and to foster and support efforts to achieve an environment conducive to ensuring peace, prosperity and security for both Israeli and Palestinian people, including through the work of the Quartet. Building on the spirit of the Madrid Conference, only through a negotiated and committed process with international support can real peace and reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians be achieved. Only through dialogue and diplomacy can both the Israeli and Palestinian people attain the equal measures of freedom, security, dignity and prosperity that they rightly deserve.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador Agyeman for his important statement, which reaffirms that the Security Council remains fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. I also thank Ghana for its long-standing and unwavering support for the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Rattray: I would like to convey the greetings of the Secretary-General, who has asked me to personally deliver the following message.

"We commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at a time of diminished hope for peace. I am deeply saddened by the growing number of Palestinian civilians who have lost their lives in the spiral of violence engulfing the occupied West Bank. Each casualty fuels fear and yet more violence. I urge all parties to take immediate steps to reduce tensions and to break this deadly cycle of violence. The long-standing drivers of conflict, including the ongoing occupation, settlement expansion, home demolitions and evictions, heighten anger, despair and hopelessness.

"Meanwhile, Gaza continues to endure debilitating closures and humanitarian crises. I reiterate my call on the parties to engage to end the closures of Gaza and improve living conditions for all Palestinians. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remains a vital lifeline for Palestinian refugees. I commend the donors for their support and urge all to step up and provide predictable and sufficient funding to enable UNRWA to fully deliver on its mandate.

"The United Nations position is clear. Peace must advance and the occupation must end. We are steadfast in our commitment to realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States. Together let us reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for all."

I would now like to say a few words of my own. As our world confronts a deluge of conflicts and crises, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is a powerful reminder that we must never lose sight of the ever-deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. As we heard earlier from the Chair, 2022 has witnessed a dangerous escalation in Israeli military raids across the occupied Palestinian territory. We are on course right now to see the deadliest year for

Palestinians since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began systematically tracking fatalities in 2005. The West Bank is a tinderbox of tension. The situation in Jerusalem is becoming more fragile amid acts of provocation and violence in and around the holy sites. And Gaza's 2 million Palestinian inhabitants continue to suffer under debilitating closures. We have welcomed the steps to ease access and movement that have been made over the past year, but more is needed to lower tensions and open a clear political horizon. I echo the Secretary-General's gratitude to the Member States supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and urge all to help set the Agency on a solid financial footing.

Without a credible political path to ending the occupation, the situation will only worsen. Demolitions, illegal settlement expansion, forced evictions and collective punitive measures will not bring about peace, and neither will violence and incitement. Only constructive and credible good-faith negotiations in line with the long-established parameters for a two-State solution can produce a sustainable and durable result. I therefore urge Israelis, Palestinians and the broader international community to forge a path towards negotiations and, ultimately, peace. We must restore hope. Rest assured that the United Nations will never waver in pursuit of that goal.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Rattray for delivering the Secretary-General's very important statement and for sharing his own equally powerful thoughts on the question of Palestine. I would like to express the Committee's sincere appreciation for the Secretary-General's personal efforts to advance a two-State solution as a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, who will read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I have the honour to read a statement by President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine on this occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

(spoke in Arabic)

"I would like at the outset to extend my thanks and gratitude and those of the Palestinian people to all those around the world who believe in our just historic question and its centrality, and to all who have expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people and supported their legitimate struggle, while bearing witness to their resilience and steadfastness in the occupied Palestinian territory, with Jerusalem at its heart. The world has also witnessed the struggle and suffering of our people in the refugee camps in our homeland and diaspora.

"We also express our sincere thanks to the overwhelming majority of States that have reiterated their support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their commitment to international law and international legitimacy. The steadfastness of our Palestinian people in their land and across the world, and the unwavering solidarity of those present today with our people, are what have kept the Palestinian question alive and living despite the passage of time and succeeding generations.

"Another year has passed for the Palestinian people as they continue to languish under the Israeli occupation. It was another year of killing, siege, arrest, forced displacement and home demolitions. It was another year of settlements and the dismemberment of our homeland through the annexation wall, land confiscation and military checkpoints. It was another year that witnessed more violence and incitement against our people and their Christian and Islamic holy sites; violence and incitement by the Israeli occupation, with all its military and political components, as well as the extremist settler groups, including Israeli officials and members of the Knesset. Recent Israeli elections demonstrated that the same extremist politicians live for destroying our homeland, violating our rights and robbing us of our freedom. It was a year that the United Nations described as the deadliest for the Palestinian people in the West Bank since the second intifada, with daily and continued violations against all Palestinian civilians, including children and women.

"The entire world witnessed Israel's assassination of the Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the voice of Palestine and an icon

of the Arab media. She was assassinated by the Israeli occupying forces in cold blood, despite her colleagues' appeals and attempts to rescue her. Israeli occupying forces also viciously attacked her funeral procession and her pallbearers — a shameful act by any standard of humanity. That is Israel and its occupation, epitomized by that crime against our people, which has been committed over and over again. It was a crime that summed up a people's suffering for more than seven decades. It was a crime committed by Israel in full view of the whole world, documenting its guilt and impunity. That is the case of the Palestinian people under the occupation of Israel, which considers itself above the law. A people who endure oppression, suffering and deprivation and who for decades have been losing their children, land, homes and livelihoods in full view of the whole world, without any accountability for Israel's occupation and all its crimes that can provide the Palestinian people with justice and protection under international law.

“We cannot expect the Israeli occupier, who supports settlements and settler terrorism, persists in his siege and his aggression against our people, abuses our prisoners, destroys our homes, detains and displaces our children, to wake up one day and choose justice and peace. The international community must take action and intensify its efforts to put pressure on Israel to end its occupation and crimes.

“Decades ago, the international community identified its vision for peace as a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. That vision has been enshrined in the resolutions of our Organization. United Nations resolutions have defined the terms of reference and the basis for resolving the conflict, as well as the mechanisms for achieving it within a set time frame, including through the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which was aimed primarily at salvaging a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. The resolutions have also determined the obligations of the parties, as well as those of States, to refrain from recognizing illegal unilateral actions or supporting them in any way, to distinguish in their dealings with Israel between the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and the territory of the Israeli occupying Power, to ensure respect

for international law and to provide international protection for our defenceless people.

“We should remind the States that have established trade or diplomatic offices in Jerusalem, and those that have concluded agreements with companies or educational institutions operating in settlements or that buy products from those settlements, that all such actions are in violation of international law and encourage the Israeli occupation authorities to perpetrate more crimes against the Palestinian people. We want those States to know that they are increasing our people's suffering through such actions because they entrench the occupation of our land and do not contribute to peace, security and stability in the region.

“The international community has long rejected Israel's policies of colonial annexation of our land and settlement expansion, its violation of the rights of our people and its acts of aggression against our Christian and Islamic holy sites. That supportive international stance must be accompanied by practical measures that translate the international consensus into action and enable our people to exercise their right to self-determination, realize their freedom and independence on their land and achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

“We have suggested alternatives and proposals in our statements to the General Assembly and have said that the occupation authorities are undermining the possibility of a two-State solution and entrenching racial discrimination. Their military forces continue to control and abuse our Palestinian people and increase the level of violence and brutality they use against them, which we will not accept. That is why we have referred the Israeli colonial system and all its violations, including of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, to the International Court of Justice.

“The concept of a two-State solution cannot be held hostage to the occupier's will, which would amount to abandoning it altogether. We therefore stress the importance of recognizing the State of Palestine and supporting its full membership in the United Nations as an embodiment of an inherent and natural right of the Palestinian people, like that

of all other peoples of the world. An international conference should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations and governed by the rules of international legitimacy, with the aim of ending the occupation, resolving all final status issues and defining a package of guarantees for the implementation of what will be agreed on within a specific time frame so as to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that leads to the realization of the freedom of the Palestinian people and their independence in their own State based on the 4 June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

“For our part, we will spare no effort to uphold our commitments under international law, to establish the rule of law, human rights, democratic values, freedom of expression and the empowerment of women and young people and to revive our national economy. We will pursue all of that in partnership with civil society institutions and the private sector. We will also continue to uphold our obligations under international law, unify our land and people and hold presidential and legislative elections as soon as they can be organized in Jerusalem, as well as forming a national unity Government all of whose components are committed to international legitimacy. We will intensify our efforts to put our Palestinian house in order, achieve reconciliation and end division. I would like to take this occasion to thank our sister countries of Algeria and Egypt for their sincere efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation.

“The Palestinian people will not accept oppression and injustice, and we will continue to pursue our legitimate struggle against the colonial occupation of our land and people. We will not abandon the culture of peace, which is deeply rooted within us, and we will continue to pursue peaceful popular resistance. We will not accept a future of walls, blockades, racial discrimination, oppression, hatred and colonialism.

“The question of Palestine will continue to be a witness to the credibility of the international community and the effectiveness of the system it has established to uphold international law, maintain international peace and security, prohibit the acquisition of others’ territory by force and support the right of peoples to self-determination, according to its commitments enshrined in the resolutions and international instruments it has

adopted. Our people are asking for no more than what international legitimacy has granted other peoples of the world, but neither will they accept less. The destiny and fate of our people is to live in freedom and dignity on their land of Palestine, and there is no power on Earth that can prevent them from achieving that goal.”

The Chair: I would like to convey our thanks and greetings to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, for his very important message. I also want to assure President Abbas, and through him the Palestinian people, of our Committee’s firm commitment to continuing its efforts, as mandated by the General Assembly, with a view to promoting a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination in an independent State of Palestine.

I would now like to say a few words about the virtual exhibit during the first segment of this meeting, which is being launched today in connection with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The exhibit, entitled “Palestine Through its People: Portraits of Palestinians”, includes a dozen individual videos, each depicting a story of pain and resilience, and is dedicated to the memory of Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palestinian journalist who dedicated her life to bringing forth the voices and stories of her people and who was killed by the Israeli army in the occupied Palestinian territory, while doing her job as a journalist. The exhibit aims to shed light on the life and struggle of Palestinians, both in a personal dimension and as an integral part of the long and ongoing journey of the Palestinian people for freedom and justice.

I would like to showcase two of the videos. The first is entitled *Shireen Abu Akleh: The Narrator of the Palestinian Tale*, and the second is *Yasser Murtaja: Armed with a Camera in Gaza*. The full exhibit is available on the United Nations website, and some of the other portraits will also be shown during the reception following this meeting.

A video was shown in the Economic and Social Council Chamber.

The Chair: Those are wonderful and moving videos that must be seen. I would like to thank once again our technical team for enabling us to watch them.

We will now move to the second part of the meeting. I would now like to introduce the intergovernmental organizations that have supported the Palestinian cause and that over the years have chosen to participate in this special meeting to express their solidarity. We will hear representatives of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I would now like to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Peter Mohan Maithri Pieris, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, in his capacity as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

Mr. Pieris (Sri Lanka): I am honoured to address this special meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in my capacity as the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. I must thank you, Mr. Chair, as well as Ambassador Syed Mohamad Hasrin Aidid of Malaysia, as my fellow members on the Special Committee.

The year 2022 marks the forty-fifth anniversary since the General Assembly established the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1977. Today we stand in solidarity with the international community and with the people of Palestine, as always, in order to seek ways to achieve a peaceful, just and equitable solution to the question of Palestine and, most importantly, to address the plight of the Palestinian people, particularly its women and children, and provide for their humanitarian needs.

The Special Committee undertook its annual mission to Amman from 4 to 7 July. This year's visit took place in the context of what has been described as increasing settler violence. Prior to the mission, the Special Committee engaged in a week of meetings in Geneva. Both in Amman and in Geneva, the Special Committee heard the testimonies of experts, high-level Palestinian Government officials, United Nations agencies and representatives of civil society organizations from the occupied Palestinian territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Furthermore, the Special Committee visited the United Nations Relief

and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) headquarters and the Marka refugee camp, where it interacted with Palestine refugees. Those interactions once again highlighted the daily violence and suffering endured by the Palestinian people, for whom every aspect of life continues to be controlled by the unlawful occupation. The Special Committee sincerely thanks all who took time to provide it with information and shared their views, perspectives and experience with the Special Committee.

The Special Committee was informed that in the first half of 2022, 60 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, while 575 incidents of violence resulted in Palestinian deaths, injury or property damage between 1 June 2021 and 31 May 2022. The Special Committee remains deeply concerned about the reports that the families of the Palestinians who were killed continue to be deprived of closure and denied proper and dignified burials for them.

Settlement expansion continues, along with the demolition of Palestinian-owned structures and the displacement of Palestinian residents, notwithstanding the relevant Security Council resolutions. As has been reiterated by the Secretary-General, the Security Council and other United Nations bodies, settlement activities are a flagrant violation of international law and should therefore cease immediately. According to the information received by the Special Committee, approximately 1,200 residents of Masafer Yatta face an imminent risk of forced eviction and displacement and would constitute the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1967. The Special Committee appeals to the occupying Powers to act with restraint and to ensure that the human rights of all the people of Palestine and other Arabs in the occupied territory are protected, as well as guaranteeing access to humanitarian assistance.

According to information received, the Israeli practice of a land, sea and air blockade in the Gaza Strip and the related closures have effectively deprived Palestinians of access to basic needs such as food, safe drinking water, health and sanitary facilities, education and the right to legal representation, among other things. The blockade and closures, combined with the effects of the May 2021 conflict and the coronavirus disease pandemic, have continued to stifle the local economy. We are concerned about the reports of an increase in 2022 in the number of arrests of fishermen, their harassment and the confiscation or destruction of their boats. Testimonies provided to the Special

Committee report that they are often subject to ill-treatment and physical abuse and are not allowed to contact their families. The entry and export of goods are strictly controlled and restricted. Gazans requiring urgent medical care outside the Strip are unable to do so without exit permits.

I acknowledge with deep appreciation the work done by UNRWA to provide care and assistance to Palestinian refugees for more than seven decades. The Special Committee takes note of the status of UNRWA and its need for predictable and sustainable funding in order to continue to fulfil its mandate to deliver to Palestine refugees and contribute to regional stability. The Special Committee joins hands with the international community in seeking a just, sustainable and genuine resolution to the question of Palestine through the attainment of a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. We call for an end to the suffering of the Palestine people. The Special Committee therefore appeals to all the parties concerned to create the necessary environment to facilitate confidence-building in support of efforts to resume dialogue and negotiations. We encourage constructive engagement in good faith and efforts to look beyond the herculean task in order to forge a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine.

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Special Committee continues to be encouraged by the people's courage and strength of purpose, which have prevailed over considerable challenges. We continue to be inspired by their resilience and endurance, and we reaffirm our steadfast support for their cause, which is one of achieving their legitimate rights and aspirations in order to build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity.

The Chair: I thank Ambassador Pieris for his important statement. We appreciate the Special Committee's continued contribution to the question of Palestine, as well as Mr. Pieris's country's participation in our Committee's activities as a very active member.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Salem Matug, a representative of the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, who will read a message from His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Mr. Matug (African Union): I have the pleasure to deliver the following statement on behalf of His

Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

"I send the Committee my warm personal greetings, as well as those of the African Union Commission, on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Every year we gather to commemorate this day in recognition of the Palestinian cause and to send a message to the Palestinian people expressing our support for their legitimate cause.

"The African Union Commission continues to call on the international community to assume its responsibilities concerning the question of Palestine and the implementation of all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions adopted between 1948 and now in order to compel Israel to comply with international law. For many decades, Israel has continued its policy of building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories in clear violation of international norms and standards. Those illegal settlements are built on confiscated or stolen Palestinian land. They contribute to forced displacement, severely limit Palestinians' access to basic resources, including water, land and religious sites, and prolong a system of segregation and structural inequality between Palestinians and Israelis. Now more than ever there is a need for urgent and renewed efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict, based on a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony within the framework of the relevant African Union and United Nations pronouncements. The current situation calls for urgent action aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

"The African Union Commission expresses its grave and deep concern over the critical situation of the Palestinian refugees. The Israeli occupation of Palestine continues to greatly define every aspect of the daily lives of young people and camp residents, affecting everything from security and freedom of movement to livelihoods and employment. Palestinian refugees continue to face serious protection challenges due to the ongoing occupation, armed conflict and displacement. Palestinian refugees in many places face existential threats and are sinking deeper into poverty and desperation. That disastrous situation

for Palestinians has deepened and worsened as a result of the conflict in the region.

“Not only is 29 November the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, but it is also a day that reflects the desire of the international community to see the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a final peace agreement. Sadly, this year did not bring any of the progress we were looking for, as the peace talks are still not back on track.

“African support for the Palestinian cause is based on the values of freedom and justice and the humanitarian principles that Africa defends in international forums alongside all those striving to ensure that Palestine regains its right to exist as a key viable State in the Middle East.

“Africa has consistently expressed its deep concern regarding the consequences of unilateral policies, actions and provocations, including the ongoing lockdown in the Gaza Strip. The continuation of the Israeli occupation and its persistence with settlement activities, the arrest and detention of civilians, the extrajudicial killing of young people and children, the blockade of Gaza, home demolitions, repeated attacks by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian people and their properties and provocations, including incitement against the holy sites, goes against the principles that we have signed up to as members of the United Nations.

“We must continue the efforts to find a lasting solution. We therefore call upon the international community and all stakeholders to commit to relaunching the peace process in the Middle East to find a just and lasting solution to the conflict that would establish a viable, sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

“Permit me to conclude by congratulating you, Mr. Chair, on your leadership and by commending the Committee for its tireless work as we continue to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters and their struggle for lasting peace.”

The Chair: I thank Mr. Matug for sharing that very important statement from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. I also thank him for his very kind words.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to read out a message from His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Abdelaziz (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, Mr. Chair, to deliver the statement of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an important annual occasion and international event that recalls the just Palestinian question and the right of the Palestinian people to fully enjoy their legitimate and inalienable rights, including, primarily, their right to self-determination, an end to the occupation and the establishment of their independent and sovereign State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“Unfortunately, our meeting is taking place at a time when the prospects for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of a two-State solution are at an impasse. Those prospects are under threat, as the Israeli occupation continues its racist policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and intensifies its aggression against the Palestinian people in flagrant violation of the principles of human rights and international law, as well as resolutions of international legitimacy.

“As we meet now, the occupying Israeli army continues murdering in cold blood Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank. We are also witnessing an increase in the number of field executions and incursions, with gangs of settlers continuing to threaten Palestinian lives and property and desecrate Christian and Muslim holy sites while the occupying army and police encourage them and protect the perpetrators. Moreover, the policies of settlement expansion, land grabbing and Judaization in East Jerusalem continue as the world looks on. Furthermore, nearly 5,000 Palestinian prisoners are still languishing in prisons of the Israeli occupation under abominable conditions. And more than 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been subjected to an unjust and

suffocating Israeli blockade for more than 15 years while living without access to the most basic means for a dignified life.

“As we are all well aware, Israel has not implemented any of the United Nations resolutions pertaining to Palestine and its just question. They amount specifically to 754 resolutions of the General Assembly, 97 of the Security Council and 96 of the Human Rights Council. Israel has still not complied with the Arab Peace Initiative launched at the Arab summit held in Beirut 20 years ago, despite attempts by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to revive the Initiative. That illustrates the extent to which the occupying Power holds such resolutions and initiatives, as well as the will of the international community, in contempt. That also demonstrates the international community’s policy of double standards when it comes to dealing with the colonialist occupying regime undermining trust in the legitimate international system while the international community remains incapable of implementing those resolutions, applying them to the occupation authorities and providing protection for the Palestinian people.

“The international community should discharge its responsibilities and ensure international protection for the Palestinian people. The international community must deter the colonialist and expansionist regime of the occupying Power. Israel cannot continue to benefit from impunity and must be held legally accountable for the crimes it has committed and continues to commit on a daily basis against the Palestinian people.

“The League of Arab States calls on the United Nations to support all Palestinian and Arab diplomatic efforts to bolster the status of the State of Palestine at the international level, in particular by making the State of Palestine a full-fledged member of the United Nations and thereby an active member of the international community. It is inconceivable that Israel has been a full-fledged Member State of the United Nations since 1949 while the State of Palestine remains a mere observer, despite having proved itself deserving of being a full-fledged member.

“Our faith in the need for a just and comprehensive peace, despite all the obstacles and delays, must remain the message we all send

in order to uphold truth and justice. Therefore, the League of Arab States and its members commend all peace-loving States and all those who have taken a courageous supportive stance in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle.

“We reject and condemn the crimes, violations and practices perpetrated by the occupation authorities while applauding all States that uphold international law and refuse to bend to Israel’s pressure and deception aimed at altering the status quo in Jerusalem by imposing a new reality on the ground that deprives the Palestinian people of their right to an independent State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

“The League of Arab States values the important role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in protecting and defending the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them their right to self-determination. We insist on the need for convening an international conference to launch direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel, as well as to implement a two-State solution with the creation of an independent Palestinian State.

“Australia has reviewed its position and the new Australian Government has withdrawn a decision taken by a previous Government recognizing West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, in a clear demonstration of the failure of Israel’s efforts in that regard. Australia has joined the vast majority of States around the world in upholding international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy. We want to remind all of the dangerous nature of any country’s decision to transfer its embassy to occupied Jerusalem. We call on States that have taken such an illegal step to change course and instead follow Australia’s example. We strongly applaud Australia for its decision, which promotes truth and noble human values.

“The League of Arab States welcomes the roles of Jordan and Morocco in safeguarding the Muslim and Christian holy sites in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The League commends the international efforts in the General Assembly to call on the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the issue of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and urges all States to vote in favour of

it in the Assembly. The League of Arab States also welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which will enable the Agency to discharge its noble mission for a further three years, as well as the positive trend towards allocating funds to support the Agency and its relevant activities from the ordinary budget of the Organization, which will help to resolve UNRWA's grave financial crisis. We call on the international community to support those efforts in the Assembly and its specialized committees. In that connection, we commend the efforts of Jordan and Sweden, as well as all other States that support the Agency.

"Finally, intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains a major challenge. In that regard, the League of Arab States welcomed the recent signing of the Algiers declaration by the Palestinian factions and applauds the role played by Algeria, under the auspices of His Excellency President Tebboune, in that successful achievement, which constitutes an important step towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation. We equally welcome all efforts to rally around Palestine by Arab States, especially Egypt and Qatar, which have made sincere and ongoing attempts to contain Palestinian differences and pave the way for reconciliation. We hope that everything that has been agreed on will be implemented, in particular with regard to the holding of Palestinian elections. We call on the international community to support efforts to promote Palestinian reconciliation and to ensure that Israel does not obstruct the holding of Palestinian elections in East Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Palestine, as happened last year, leading to a postponement of the elections.

"In conclusion, we applaud the Palestinian people for their struggle and their heroic resistance and courage in the face of the Israeli occupation and Israeli terrorism. We support their attachment to their land and to their legitimate right to freedom and independence. We thank all people living in freedom across the world who have stood in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle to put an end to the occupation and create their independent State."

The Chair: I thank His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz for his important statement on behalf of the

League of Arab States, which is an active partner of our Committee.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yashar Aliyev, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, to read out a message on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

On this solemn observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for their inalienable human rights, including to self-determination and independence. The Movement also renews its abiding commitment to achieving a fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, as well as genuine peace and security in the Middle East, on the basis of international law and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms its appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat for their important work and valued assistance in that regard, in line with their General Assembly mandates. Similarly, the Movement once again commends the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing essential humanitarian, development and emergency assistance and protection to the 5.8 million Palestine refugees in all its fields of operation. We also express our sincere appreciation to all United Nations agencies with special programmes providing essential support to the Palestinian people, including children and women. In the light of the grave financial situation facing UNRWA, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its appeal to all States to provide predictable and sufficient financial support to ensure the continuity of the Agency's vital assistance programmes, as well as its tangible contribution to regional stability, at a time of increasing need.

Regrettably, 2022 marked 55 years since the illegal Israeli military occupation in 1967 of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories. This year also marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), partitioning Mandate Palestine, and

the seventy-fourth anniversary of the 1948 Al-Nakba that tragically befell the Palestinian people. Those solemn occasions prompt the Non-Aligned Movement to reiterate its long-standing calls for intensifying all the necessary efforts to bring an end to that injustice and to advance a peaceful and just solution. The international community is called on to act forthwith to uphold its responsibilities and obligations regarding the Palestinian question until it is justly resolved.

At the ministerial meeting of NAM held on 21 September on the sidelines of the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, its Ministers adopted a political declaration stressing among other things that a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine must remain a priority on the Movement's agenda. It also remains a permanent responsibility of our organization until it is satisfactorily resolved in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions and their internationally endorsed parameters. The Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and positions regarding the question of Palestine adopted in previous summit outcome documents and ministerial declarations. They appealed for strengthened international efforts to achieve a just solution that ensures the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, as well as independence for the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

On this day, the Movement must express its deep regret that, despite their decades of participation in peace efforts in good faith, their proven commitment to the two-State solution for peace, their adherence to international law and the painful compromises they have made, the plight of the Palestinian people has worsened, and a just solution remains elusive.

As the Security Council remains paralysed on this issue, despite its Charter duties, the situation only continues to further deteriorate and become destabilized. That must be cause for great concern among the international community and should prompt urgent action to hold Israel accountable for its violations and bring them to a halt, including all illegal settlement and annexation activities in all parts of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Only such action can salvage the prospects for peace, bring an end to the Israeli occupation and achieve the

realization of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

All the relevant Security Council resolutions and the obligations under international law, including in accordance with the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and international human rights law, must be implemented. They comprise the foundations for a just and lasting peace.

Today the Non-Aligned Movement also reiterates its demand for the full and immediate lifting of all illegal blockades of the Gaza Strip by Israel, which continue to severely impair all aspects of life of the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, imposing a dire humanitarian crisis on them, further exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, and constituting a massive collective punishment.

Moreover, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its grave concern about the lack of accountability for countless violations being committed by Israel, including the killing and injuring of innocent and defenceless Palestinian civilians, among them women and children. Such a lack of accountability continues to fuel a culture of impunity and destabilize the situation on the ground, while diminishing the prospects for peace, and requires urgent action by the international community to address those grave violations and bring an end to that unjust situation.

The international community's solidarity with the just Palestinian cause must be directed towards all relevant efforts in support of the rights of the Palestinian people and the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine in all of the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions. Support must also be given to the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a full Member in order to allow it to take its rightful place among the family of nations.

To conclude, on this important day the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its unwavering commitment to a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such a peaceful solution remains a long-standing objective of the Movement. In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement firmly reiterates its call for the restoration of the inalienable rights of the heroic Palestinian people to self-determination, including the

right to their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) — the pillars of a just and lasting peace. The Movement stands ready to support and contribute to all efforts to achieve those noble goals towards the establishment of lasting peace and security for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the Middle East region as a whole.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Aliyev for delivering the very important message of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hameed Opeloyeru, Permanent Observer of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations, who will be reading out a message from Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. Opeloyeru (Organization of Islamic Cooperation): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

“The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is participating in this annual event in commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People as an expression of its firm support for the just struggle for — and the restoration of — the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard, I wish to reaffirm the principled and unambiguous position of the OIC in rejecting the policies of aggression, Judaization, colonial settlement, forced displacement and racial discrimination practiced by the Israeli occupation authorities against the people of Palestine.

“On this auspicious occasion, I would like to express our Organization’s appreciation to the United Nations and its various agencies, particularly the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for their relentless efforts and initiatives aimed at mobilizing international support and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people.

“We are meeting today amid a serious and deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the city of Al-Quds, that is a direct result of escalating violations, attacks and

crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, their land and the holy shrines of the Muslims. Those unjustified violations have claimed the lives of more than 200 Palestinians since the beginning of this year, while injuring hundreds, including women and children, in addition to the continued suffering of approximately 5,500 Palestinians in Israeli occupation prisons.

“The situation in the city of Al-Quds is no less serious, owing to the repeated attacks and violations by extremist settler groups — which are protected by the Israeli occupation forces — against Islamic and Christian sanctities, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. On this occasion, we reiterate that Al-Quds, the capital of the State of Palestine, is an integral part of the Palestinian land occupied in 1967. We also underscore the need to preserve the legal and historical status of the Islamic and Christian holy sites therein, as we call for the immediate cessation of all Israeli measures aimed at changing the geographical and demographic status of those holy places.

“While strongly condemning Israel’s policy of confiscation of land, construction of colonial settlements and similar acts of provocation, violence and terrorism against the Palestinian people, their land and property, we caution, in that regard, that illegal practices that continue without deterrence or accountability will encourage Israel’s persistence in committing more crimes and attacks against the Palestinian people.

“On more than one occasion, we have stressed the United Nations political, legal and humanitarian responsibility, especially at the Security Council level, in response to the persistence of the Israeli occupation, which defies international will and legitimacy, as well as Israel’s attempts to impose a fait accompli on the ground and to evade its obligations under international agreements and resolutions.

“We also underline the need to put an end to Israel’s colonial plans to undermine the vision of the two-State solution and to hold it accountable for the violations and crimes that it still commits on a daily basis against the Palestinian people, their land and their holy sites.

“While condemning administrative detention policies and the inhumane and repressive treatment to which Palestinian prisoners are subjected in Israeli occupation prisons, we stress the need to examine the record of human rights violations by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people. We also reiterate the need to ensure that Israel, the occupying Power, will abide by its obligations under all the relevant international instruments, as well as to exert pressure to compel it to release all prisoners, especially the sick, the elderly, children, women and administrative detainees.

“The OIC reaffirms that no security, peace or stability can be realized in the Middle East without a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the cause of Palestine in all its aspects and ramifications and in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We also renew our call on international actors to engage in a multilateral political process to end the Israeli occupation, achieve justice and provide international protection for the Palestinian people, as well as to enable them to exercise their rights, including their right to establish their sovereign State in the Palestinian land occupied since 1967, with Al-Quds as its capital, and find a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue in accordance with resolution 194 (III).”

The Chair: I thank Mr. Opeloyeru for his statement, and I would like to emphasize the Committee’s appreciation for his important message, as well as the strong support of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation for and partnership in our Committee’s activities.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to our final speaker today, Mr. Shawan Jabarin, General Director of Al-Haq and a veteran activist for just peace and the struggle for human rights. He was the first Palestinian to be recognized by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. In 2013, Mr. Jabarin was elected as a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists. In the same year, he was elected as Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights for his role in calling for accountability for violations of Palestinian rights. In 2011, Mr. Jabarin was appointed to the Human Rights Watch Middle East Advisory Board. Mr. Jabarin and Al-Haq have been ongoing targets of Israel’s campaign to delegitimize Palestinian human rights organizations, including

Israel’s decision in October to designate Al-Haq and five other human rights and humanitarian Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist organizations. Mr. Jabarin will be speaking live from the occupied Palestinian territory.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jabarin.

Mr. Jabarin: I am honoured to be here with everyone today. I would have preferred to make my statement in person in New York, but unfortunately my United Nations travel visa was declined, despite the official invitation.

Allow me to first start by saluting the Palestinian people in Palestine, as well as the refugees in exile, and reminding them that persecution cannot last forever. The perpetrators of international crimes will be held accountable, and justice will prevail. Liberation and the collective exercise of our inalienable right to self-determination will come in our lifetime. That is both our fundamental right and our guarantee from the international community.

Today, as we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory has entered its fifty-sixth year, and we are now marking 75 years since the General Assembly’s adoption of resolution 181 (II), on partitioning the majority-Palestinian land of Palestine. For the Palestinian people, that means three quarters of a century of dispossession, land appropriation, imposed fragmentation, exile and persecution. All the while, Israel is implementing its discriminatory system of laws, policies and practices against the Palestinian people, expanding and entrenching its colonial settler apartheid regime, removing Palestinians and replacing them — an ongoing Nakba in full sight of an idle and impotent international community.

The Palestinian people continue to be denied the realization of their internationally recognized right to self-determination and the right of refugees to return. For generations, Palestinians have been systematically and brutally denied their right to determine and realize the free, dignified lives they seek. Even the territory of the Palestinian State provided for by the General Assembly is becoming ever more relentlessly fragmented, dislocated and lost to de facto annexation. That is due to the rapidly expanding settlement enterprise, entrenching a permanent colonial settler project in Palestine. Those aggressive acts, which violate the territorial integrity of Palestine, have

continued unabated for decades because of the impunity the project enjoys and the generous and unconditional support it receives. Accountability is seriously lacking, and the shield of impunity enables and encourages the perpetrators to continue their international crimes. That impunity must end.

In institutionalizing apartheid, among other tools, Israel has for decades sought to systematically destroy and remove the Palestinian people by all means. At the same time, Israel adopts laws aimed at systematically suppressing all resistance and opposition to its colonial settler apartheid regime. Killings, arbitrary detentions, torture and collective punishment occur every day. Parents await the return of their dead children's bodies to bury them. There are demolitions of homes and forced displacement. Patients are denied access to medical treatment. Trees are uprooted, and the land and rich natural resources are destroyed and pillaged. In Gaza, we see the cruel inhumanity of a 15-year siege. Those are just some examples of the constant subjugation of Palestinians and the forms of physical and psychological violence that they suffer at the hands of the colonial settler apartheid regime. Human rights defenders and organizations have been criminalized, deemed unlawful and labelled terrorists, all to silence and eliminate them in order to prevent the documentation of international crimes. We will not be silenced. We remain undeterred, both in fulfilling our mission and as part of the global human rights movement.

Israel's occupation is not a traditional one. It is definitely not temporary. It has far exceeded its legal and moral parameters. It brings high costs, and not merely financially and politically. Its consequences are severe, and not only for Palestinians. Nevertheless, the international community continues to be averse to applying the instruments of international law that it has itself created in order to end the occupation and all the associated unlawful acts. It is therefore difficult for Palestinians, especially young people, to maintain faith in an international legal order that continually fails to protect and realize their rights. It is essential to revive hope and faith among the people of Palestine in their struggle for freedom, justice and dignity. It is equally important that our people live up to their responsibilities, unite their ranks and strengthen our representative institutions democratically.

In order to overcome the fragmentation of the Palestinian people, we need to first accurately diagnose the problem. We ask that Member States of the General

Assembly recognize the situation in Palestine as one of settler colonialism and apartheid and comply with their international responsibilities to bring that illegal situation to an end.

We need adequate international mechanisms and forums with the jurisdiction and competence to examine questions of settler colonialism and apartheid holistically. It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly reconstitute the Special Committee against Apartheid and the United Nations Centre against Apartheid.

To end the decades of impunity, we call on the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to expedite its investigation and for member States of the Assembly of State Parties to ensure protection for Palestinian civil society, in coordination with the Court. Globally, regarding draft resolution A/C.4/77/L.12/Rev.1, recently recommended by the Fourth Committee, we ask that the request for an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice be supported by all Member States of the General Assembly. It is time for the international community, particularly States in the global North, to drop the selectivity and double standards in the implementation of international law. Economic projects and the normalization of relations on the basis of economic and security interests will not yield the peace we all yearn for. On the contrary, it will deepen and entrench oppression. For meaningful peace to materialize, supremacy, racial discrimination, systems of persecution and colonization need to be dismantled.

The Chair: I thank Mr. Jabarin for his very important statement. We admire his courage and commitment, and we are looking forward to being in touch so that together we can promote the rights of the Palestinian people.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank all civil society organizations active on the question of Palestine throughout the world for their valuable work in support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Committee commits to continue working with Palestinian civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations to fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

It is my honour now to announce that our Committee has received messages of support and solidarity from many Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations. I

would like to read out the list of the officials who have sent them, in the order in which they were received.

We have received messages from the Heads of State of the following countries: Egypt, Senegal, Iraq, the Maldives, Qatar, Morocco, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Viet Nam, Jordan, China, Tunisia, the Russian Federation, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Brunei Darussalam, the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, Indonesia, Algeria, Kuwait and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We have received messages from the Heads of Government of the following countries: India, Malta, Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The Committee has also received messages from the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the following countries: the Syrian Arab Republic, Kazakhstan, Botswana, Argentina, Nicaragua, Mexico, Namibia, Ecuador, Lebanon and Japan.

We have received messages from the Governments of the following countries: Brazil and the Philippines.

The Committee has also received a message from the following intergovernmental organization: the European Union.

Finally, the Committee has received a message from the following civil society organization: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

All the messages of solidarity received will be posted on the website on the question of Palestine maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights, un.org/unispal. The list will be duly updated as new messages are received.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government, Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Governments and organizations that I have just mentioned, and to all participants for their persistent efforts through the 55 years of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and for the support they have always given to the mandated activities of the Committee.

I would like to seize this opportunity to pay a very special tribute to the members of the Bureau of the Committee for their strong commitment and team spirit and for being an inspiration to the Chair, as well as to

all the members and observers of the Committee for their admirable commitment. We are looking forward to making the Committee stronger and more proactive, particularly in these difficult times.

Before adjourning this special meeting, I would like to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information, the Office of Central Support Services, the interpreters and everyone who worked behind the scenes. I wish to invite everyone to the luncheon reception in the Delegates' Dining Room on the fourth floor at 1 p.m.

Please be reminded that on 30 November at 10 a.m., the General Assembly will begin its debate under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine", during which I will introduce the draft resolutions related to this agenda item endorsed by the Committee and present the annual report of the Committee for 2022. We strongly encourage the members of the Assembly to attend and provide support by voting on 30 November to adopt draft resolutions A/77/L.23, A/77/L.24, A/77/L.25 and A/77/L.26 by the traditional overwhelming majority of the General Assembly.

The representative of Cuba has asked for the floor to make a statement.

I now give him the floor.

Mr. Pedrosó Cuesta (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I did not initially intend to take the floor, but I wanted to request it before you adjourned the meeting, Mr. Chair, because I want it to be reflected in the official record that Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, as he has traditionally done, sent a letter to the delegation of Palestine in honour of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was also sent in due course to the Secretariat. As that was not mentioned, I wanted it to be reflected in the record of today's meeting.

The Chair: I thank the representative of Cuba for providing us with that important information, which will be taken into account, and the list will be duly updated.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.