



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

AT THE

**OPENING OF THE PLENARY DEBATE ON THE
QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK
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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This morning, I had the honor to address the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. I recalled the United Nations' permanent responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until this question is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law, as stated in resolution A/59/31. Indeed, solidarity with the Palestinian People is an intrinsic part of our common responsibility to support the Middle East peace process.

It is in this context that the General Assembly, in the same resolution of last year, recalled the relevant Security Council resolutions and welcomed the affirmation by the Security Council of the vision of a region, where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. This constitutes the foundation for the peace process.

Let me also use this occasion to express appreciation to all governments, regional organizations, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and individuals for their untiring work and dedication to achieve lasting peace and security in the Middle East and to provide humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

We must spare no efforts to assist both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to decades of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and conflict.

I was particularly gratified to hear this morning the message of the President of the Palestinian Authority, H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he stated that the Palestinian Authority has, I quote, “chosen peace and negotiations as the path to reaching a just and comprehensive peace ...” and he added “our hands remain outstretched for peace”, end of quote.

This year has already marked some real progress. The Palestinian people demonstrated their commitment to democracy during the presidential election in January. The international community welcomed the Israeli withdrawal and dismantlement of settlements in the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank in the late summer. Last week, on November 25, following an agreement by both sides on movement and access, the President of the Palestinian Authority formally re-opened the Gaza Strip’s border crossing with Egypt, giving the Palestinians control over one of their frontiers for the first time in their history. An important step was thus taken to fulfill the vision of a future Palestinian state.

All those who made this possible through painstaking and complicated negotiations with persistence and tenacity of efforts are to be commended. The parties are encouraged to continue their co-operation on outstanding issues related to disengagement, supported by the international community.

The Roadmap, supported by the Quartet, provides a solid basis for the continued work for peace. The international community must intensify its engagement in helping the parties to end a conflict which for far too long has tormented the region and its peoples. It is crucial that Palestinians and

Israelis now cooperate to the fullest extent possible. Actions which could aggravate the situation and increase suspicions and mistrust must not be undertaken. Violence and acts of terror must cease.

In the meantime, everything must be done to alleviate the daily plight of the Palestinian people. Access and mobility are crucial for dealing with unemployment and poverty. International assistance should focus not only on humanitarian relief but also on capacity building programmes as part of a development strategy for a future Palestinian state.

Let us hope, and be determined, that with the full backing of the United Nations and the world community, the peace process will be re-activated so that we finally can see the realization of the vision for a region, where two States, Israel and Palestine, face the future together in peace and cooperation.