



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN
PEOPLE**

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

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Mr Chairman, Mr Secretary-General, Mr President of the Security Council, Mr Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and grateful to be invited to address you today as President of the General Assembly. Today we meet at the United Nations to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People – as we have done every year since the late 1970's when the General Assembly of the United Nations had decided to establish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We continue to observe this Day in order to support the Middle East peace process and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people.

Last year, in resolution 59/31, the General Assembly 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. We also reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until this question is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law. I commend you, Mr Chairman, for what you and your Committee have done to remind us of this solemn and serious responsibility.

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.

The last thirty year period has been a troubling and difficult one for the region and for its peoples. Political progress has been slow or absent. Images and realities of violence and human suffering have dominated the Palestinian-Israeli relations. Lack of trust has permeated this crucial relationship.

Against this somber background it is gratifying to note progress made this year. 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, H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, 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.

Palestinians and Israelis must now build on these achievements and strengthen the momentum towards the peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. 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 co-operate 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. Hope and a sense of positive direction must be restored to the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

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 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 an end to decades of Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and conflict. Both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples have had enough of despair and loss of life. They deserve a future of peace, security and good-neighbourly relations. Let us all intensify our efforts to make this happen. This is in the interest of the parties, in the interest of the region and in the interest of international peace and security.