



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

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1. Question of Palestine
2. The Situation in the Middle East

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we begin consideration of this afternoon's agenda item, let me reaffirm an undisputed consensus: the creation of an independent Palestinian state living side by side with the State of Israel, within secure and mutually recognized borders. This universally accepted solution has recently been robustly reaffirmed in Resolution 67/16, which granted Palestine the status of non-member Observer State in the United Nations.

I take note of the considerable international diplomatic activity that has been taking place in order to re-start the stalled negotiations between the two sides. There has been some forward movement on questions of substance, which I welcome. However, at the same time, there have been steps taken that are distinctly unhelpful to, and even undermine, the chances of finding the kind of solution called for by our Assembly.

The current situation is that the progression of the negotiations stands in jeopardy, and none of the overwhelming number of supporters of peace and stability in the region wishes to contemplate the possible consequences of such a situation.

Excellencies,

The attention of the international community is currently being turned toward a new paradigm for improving the quality of life of human beings beyond 2015.

At the heart of the Post-2015 Agenda is a concern for people, regardless of race, religion or economic status; a concern for the dignity and worth of the human person, in the words of our Charter.

It is extremely regrettable that at such a moment, the people of Palestine find themselves locked in a historical battle for the very physical space that they have long called their home; such space

is a necessary condition to satisfy their basic aspirations, **today**, to live in security, freedom, honour and dignity.

Human dignity cannot be compartmentalized. The desecration of humanity, whether in the West Bank or in Gaza or in Syria or elsewhere, is the desecration of humanity everywhere, and this should be of concern to all people.

Distinguished Delegates,

In my address to this Assembly on, June 14th, I informed Member States that my priority for the 68th Session was “The Post 2015 Development Agenda – Setting the Stage.” In those remarks, I signaled my intention to hold a number of Thematic Debates, including one on “Ensuring stable and peaceful societies.” This activity is intended to feed into the articulation of the Post 2015 Development Agenda, which is an agenda for all peoples, countries and regions, including the Middle East.

This region, regrettably, seems to be one where the dream of achieving peace and stability faces its keenest challenges, with causes that are both internal and external. In this regard, the political and social unrest that has taken place in a number of countries during the past few years readily comes to mind.

It is for this reason that I welcome the limited-term agreement recently announced by the G5+1 and Iran regarding the latter’s nuclear programme. The negotiations that preceded the announcement of this agreement had begun with a dangerous rise in suspicions regarding the nature of Iran’s nuclear programme. I believe, and I hope, this weekend’s agreement represents a step in the direction of easing those tensions and suspicions. Therefore, I trust that as we all look toward the future, memories of past wrongs, whether in word or deed, will not unduly influence perceptions of present intentions.

I look forward to the timely and good-faith implementation of the terms of this instrument, as a contribution to strengthening peace and stability in the Middle East. I expect that such

implementation will guide us on the path from confrontation to dialogue – dialogue that is aimed at strengthening peace, security and well-being within and among peoples.

For it is through dialogue that we have a better understanding of each other's fears and suspicions. It is through dialogue that we show signs that we are as mindful of the hurts of others as we are of our own. It is through dialogue that we foster the spirit of trust and confidence that alone can sustain and give strength to our decisions.

And it is through dialogue that we will identify the pathways toward a just, lasting and mutually satisfactory agreement between the independent states of Israel and Palestine, and toward a stable and peaceful Middle East in general.

Thank you.
