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Statement by
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Of
The Syrian Arab Republic

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Mr. President.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as president of the Sixty Second session of the GA, and wish you success in your important task. Allow me also to salute your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed AL-Khalifa of fraternal Bahrain and express our appreciation to her for the efforts she deployed to bring the work of the preceding session to a successful conclusion.

I also want to express to the new Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon our best wishes for success in his noble mission, that of guiding our international organization towards the realization of the purposes and principles of its charter.

Mr. President,

The Middle East region has been an arena of daunting challenges and heightened tensions due to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories that has continued since 1967, and to the denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. This is not a new development; however challenges and tensions are escalating and as such they are not only threatening security and stability throughout the region, but also international peace and security. The hopes of the peoples of the region in arriving at a just and comprehensive peace and living in a secure and stable environment have faded if not totally died. Moreover, the current situation in Iraq, and the attendant anger and apprehensions it has generated have turned the region into a hot bed of tensions and a theatre for confrontations instead of allowing it to prosper, pursue its development goals and achieve progress.

May I therefore ask what have we accomplished over the past year or during the previous Session of the General Assembly toward addressing the root causes of tensions and confrontations plaguing the Middle East region? This situation does not serve the interests of any of the parties, inside or outside the region. The prevailing trends have not changed: Israeli occupation of Arab lands continues, so does the denial of the legitimate Palestinian rights. One can even say that the support, financing and vindication of these policies continued unabated and have even surpassed previous records. The recently reported figures on the increased United States arming of Israel speak for themselves

The latest act of Israeli aggression against Syria on September 6, 2007 is a proof of Israel's desire to escalate tension. We reiterate that the failure of the international community, including the Security Council to condemn this act of aggression would encourage Israel to persist in this hostile pursuit, and lead to a an exacerbation of tensions in the region. Some sources in the United States have spread rumors and fabricated news in order to justify this act of aggression. By distorting the facts they have become Israel's accomplices in this act of aggression.

Mr. President,

Addressing and pursuing peace in the Middle East require first and foremost evincing the will to make peace on the basis of right and justice. Regrettably, this will does not factor into the priorities of some of the policies pursued nowadays. The contemplated substance, approach and objectives of an international gathering that seeks to find a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict remain vague. Furthermore, the proposed gathering fails to identify the purposes, basics, terms of reference and time frames of the process.

Mr. President,

Syria has repeatedly stressed that peace is its strategic choice. President Bashar Al-Asad highlighted this fact in the statement he made before the People's Assembly on July 17, 2007. He stated that Syria is ready for a just and comprehensive peace built on the resolutions of international legitimacy which he deemed to be the prelude to the realization of peace and security in the region. This statement confirms that Syria has the will to make a genuine peace that would recover the usurped rights, return the land to its rightful owners and guarantee peace for all. We have repeatedly called for a resumption of the peace process on the basis of the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace. Let me ask here: does the Israeli government or the current American administration still have this will, the will to make a genuine peace? Regrettably, actions and realities suggest otherwise.

Mr. President,

The current situation in Iraq presages great dangers for Iraq and the region. Addressing this situation requires effective cooperation among all parties inside Iraq, in the region and the world at large. The absence of a genuine political vision for a solution and the exclusive reliance on the military solution further aggravates the situation. We have always stressed the need to preserve the unity of the Iraqi people, the territorial integrity of Iraq, the non-interference in its internal affairs, the preservation of its sovereignty, independence, its Arab and Islamic identity and the rejection of any claims to divide Iraq.

We believe that the solution in Iraq must begin with national reconciliation based on the principle of respect for the will of all Iraqis to determine their political future or lay the basis for the new Iraq that is built on equal citizenship. We therefore stress the need for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq, subject to the agreement of the Iraqi government, because this measure will contribute to curbing the violence. We have repeatedly stressed our condemnation of all the terrorist acts committed in Iraq which claim the lives of innocent civilians. Random allegations that combatants are infiltrating into Iraq through the Syrian-Iraqi borders cannot be farther from the truth. They fail to acknowledge the strict measures that Syria has put in place to control these borders. We believe that the purpose of these unfounded accusations is assigning the responsibility for the failure of the occupying power to achieve security and stability in Iraq to others.

Mr. President,

The deteriorating security situation in Iraq prompted many Iraqis to flee their country. There are over 1.6 million Iraqi refugees in Syria today. In addition to the security and social repercussions associated with their presence, Syria is bearing enormous financial burdens to satisfy their economic needs and provide them with services. It is regrettable that the international community has failed to discharge its responsibility towards the Iraqi refugees until it becomes safe for them to return to their homes and country. The assistance that Syria received to date is almost negligible. The occupying power spends hundreds of billions of dollars on military operations inside Iraq but fails to allocate any resources to assist Iraqis who have been forced out of Iraq as a result of occupation and its concomitant repercussions.

Visits exchanged between fraternal Iraq and Syria have opened up wide horizons for mutual cooperation and identified the main areas of that cooperation at all levels. Syria, on its part shall undertake to implement all the measures agreed to during those visits.

Mr. President,

The critical and sensitive situation in fraternal Lebanon requires the Lebanese to act together in order to emerge from the current state of affairs and arrive at solutions that will serve the interest of Lebanon and its future. Syria has persistently supported all initiatives aimed at activating inter-Lebanese dialogue with a view to arriving at a consensus. We believe that the run up to the upcoming presidential elections constitutes a good basis for consensus building among the Lebanese to elect a president in accordance with constitutional prerogatives, free from foreign intervention, and in a manner that would safeguard Lebanon's interest and its Arab relations.

Mr. President,

Syria reaffirms its position calling for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East region. Allow me to recall that on 29 November, 2003, Syria tabled a draft resolution before the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group, and that we are still looking forward to its adoption.

I would like to affirm that Syria associates itself with the declared positions of other developing countries stressing the rights of all countries to freely acquire nuclear technologies and use them for peaceful purposes. We believe that it is necessary to compel Israel, the sole party in the region that possesses nuclear weapons, to submit its facilities to the safeguards regime of the IAEA and adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

Mr. President,

Like many others, I too wonder whether the world has become safer many years after the beginning of the war on terrorism. The answer is common knowledge. Terrorism has spread to areas that have never known the phenomenon before. We believe that fighting terrorism by force alone is useless. We must address the root causes of terrorism and firmly distinguish between terrorism and the peoples' legitimate rights to

resist foreign occupation. We call on all states to cooperate in the fight against terror. At the same time, we warn against using terrorism as a pretext to compromise peoples' rights and instill hatred among religions and civilizations instead of promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue in the interest of humanity at large.

Mr. President,

Earlier on in this debate, we have listened to calls advocating interference in the internal affairs of states under the pretext of defending human rights and promoting democracy. We question the discrepancy between words and actions in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and other parts of the world. The inhumane practices we learned of in Guantanamo and Abu-Ghreib, condoning the Israeli aggression against Lebanon last year and other Israeli practices in Palestine and the Golan constitute a grave violation of human rights. This prompts us in turn to question, and rightly so, the human rights they are advocating.

Mr. President:

More than ever before, our world needs a reaffirmation of our commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, to avoid applying double standards and free the organization from the pursuit by some to control its decisions and dictate their policies on its organs. The conflicts and strife with which our world is plagued today must prompt us to seek solutions based on enhanced inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues, and to persevere in our pursuit of political solutions to international problems in a manner that will preserve international peace and security.