

27 November 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on Agenda Item 18 “Question of Palestine”**

Excellencies,

On Monday during our debate on Revitalization I stressed that it was first and foremost by squarely tackling the priority issues of the day that the General Assembly makes itself stronger, more effective and more relevant to the lives of the global public.

We have that opportunity today - to bolster the authority and international standing of the Assembly - by addressing the “Question of Palestine”, in the light of recent developments.

Over the years, the Israeli – Palestinian conflict has produced great losses and immense human suffering on both sides. It has had wider security implications for the region and peaceful relations between nations around the world.

In his message on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, President Mahmoud Abbas made a solemn plea for the right of his people to enjoy the same sense of freedom and security as we all take for granted.

He also reiterated that security and a just peace can only be achieved through mutual respect based and equality between both peoples.

To achieve this goal, as noted by the President of the Security Council, H.E. Ambassador Natalegawa, the importance of restoring inter-Palestinian dialogue to rebuild national unity must be recognised.

Excellencies,

I would like to praise Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas for their courage and willingness to engage in substantive result orientated discussions in Annapolis that has lead to a Joint Understanding of the way forward.

They both spoke in unity when they stated that ‘the time has come’ for both peoples to put the past behind them. Both sides want peace and an end to terror.

I would like to commend US President Bush for bringing the parties together to launch a serious process of final status negotiations; and, for his personal commitment to support the conclusion of a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine before the end of 2008.

The outcome of the Annapolis Conference offers a great opportunity for a permanent two-state solution. However, as the Secretary-General emphasized during his speech, the prerequisite for success requires a resolute commitment to boldly follow words with deeds.

The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to support a two-State solution - Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security within recognised borders – as the most viable solution.

The most encouraging aspect of the Annapolis meeting is that both sides have agreed to this approach, and expressed their determination to end violence and usher in a new era of peace based on freedom, security, justice, dignity and mutual respect - principles at the core purpose of the United Nations.

I would like to call on all Member States to make every effort to support this process.

We must seize every opportunity for progress to fulfil the decade’s long aspiration of the Palestinian people to live in freedom with dignity and for the right of the Israeli people to live in peace and security with their neighbours.

The only way to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is through continuous dialogue and compromise, and a resolute commitment to achieve a permanent solution.

Both Israelis and Palestinians are going to have to be honest with their own people about the price of peace. This will require difficult choices and sacrifice from both sides, as part of a shared vision for a better future.

The stakes are high, but the alternatives are worse.

The General Assembly has repeatedly expressed its concern over the continued deterioration of humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the West Bank.

Without immediate progress the ongoing situation exacerbates the humanitarian, economic and security situation of the Palestinian people.

The worsening security and economic situation is increasing the suffering endured by women; and, hampering the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Excellencies,

The General Assembly is committed to ensuring that the peaceful resolution of the conflict continues to be at the forefront of the international community’s agenda.

The Quartet has welcomed the commitment to launch peace negotiations leading to the establishment a Palestinian State.

The Quartet's Representative, Tony Blair has proposed concrete measures to strengthen Palestinian institutions and rehabilitate the economy.

The Paris conference in December offers an important opportunity to fund these proposals and lay the foundation for a viable Palestinian state.

I urge the international community to offer its full financial, technical and political support to make these reforms a reality; and, to help alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinian people.

Excellencies,

I also appeal to both Israeli and Palestinian officials to redouble their efforts to immediately implement their respective obligations under the 'road-map', and create the necessary conditions for long-term peace, based on mutual respect and recognition.

The General Assembly must continue to play a significant to support this process. The Secretary-General has pledged the full support of the United Nations family for the renewed commitment to peace.

If we really want to succeed – to achieve lasting peace - I encourage all parties to learn from the mistakes of the past and confront the causes of failure. True reconciliation requires not only an end to hostilities but also a change of attitude.

Some people believe that to make peace is to forget. As I mentioned this morning to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People - to reconcile is a fair compromise between remembering and forgetting.

The hard work must now begin in preparation for the next major meeting of the parties in Moscow on 12 December.

Thank you.