

29 November 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

Mr. Chairman
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,

I am honoured to be invited to address you on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Respect for the dignity of all nations and peoples is a principle at the heart of the peaceful resolution of all conflicts.

Peace and solidarity go hand in hand. Today, we all have the opportunity express our solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority.

In 1975, the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr Chairman, I would like to commend the Committee's contribution to international efforts to bring peace, security and stability to the Middle East.

Over the years, the 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.

Excellencies,

The General Assembly's call on the parties to resume direct peace negotiations has been realized.

I would like to praise President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert 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.

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

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 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.

The General Assembly continues to emphasize the need for the parties, with the help of the international community, to fully and speedily resolve all remaining issues in the Gaza Strip.

This includes a durable arrangement for the border crossings, the airport, the construction of the seaport, the removal of rubble and the establishment of a permanent physical link between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The General Assembly also stresses the need for the full implementation by both parties of the Agreement on Movement and Access and the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing.

And also, the need for Israel to withdrawal from Palestinian territory it has occupied since 1967; the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; and, the resolution of the Palestine refugees issue in conformity with resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

Excellencies,

The General Assembly has also 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.

Over half of Palestinian households live below the poverty line.

There are acute strains on social services, particularly education. There is a shortage of drinking water; electricity is limited and so are medicines.

The Palestinian economy has slumped by nearly a quarter over the last year. Over half of those under 25 had no jobs.

The private sector in Gaza is almost completely paralysed. Three quarters of the Gazan population is dependent on United Nations food aid.

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 ensure 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 United Nations must play a significant role to support this process.

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. I would say that to reconcile is a fair compromise between remembering and forgetting.

Thank you.