

24 November 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

Mr. Chairman,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Brothers and Sisters,

It is with mixed emotions that I join you today to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at this event organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. As you know, Solidarity is a concept that is central to my work as the Assembly President. I want to thank the Committee for its dedicated efforts to rally our solidarity with the Palestinian people, pursuing the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

Today we recall that, 61 years ago this month, the General Assembly adopted the historic resolution 181, calling for the creation of a Jewish State and an Arab State. The State of Israel, founded a year later in 1948, now celebrates 60 years of its existence. Shamefully, there is still no Palestinian State to celebrate.

As I stated in my first address to the General Assembly last September, I believe that the failure to create a Palestinian State as promised is the single greatest failure in the history of the United Nations. It has been 60 years since some 800,000 Palestinians were driven out of their homes and property, becoming refugees and an uprooted and marginalized people.

We cannot avoid the bitter irony that next month we mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrines the right to self-determination of these very same people. We are witness to decades of the terrible conditions endured throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, yet the promise – the right -- of the Palestinian people to a homeland remains as elusive as ever.

As I speak here today, almost 1.5 millions Palestinians are enduring an unprecedented blockade of the Gaza Strip. All border crossings into Gaza are closed, blocking even the delivery of emergency humanitarian relief supplied by the United Nations. Lack of fuel is plunging the population into darkness and cold; basic medicines are running out; malnutrition is chronic and peoples' coping mechanisms are being exhausted.

In solidarity, I urge the international community to raise its voice against this collective punishment of the people of Gaza. We must call for an end to this massive abuse of human rights. I call on Israel, the occupying Power, to allow humanitarian and other supplies to enter the Gaza Strip without delay.

The situation in the West Bank is often overshadowed by the humanitarian crisis facing Gaza. We cannot overlook, however, the existence of over 600 checkpoints and other obstacles to freedom of movement within the West Bank. We must denounce the resumption of house demolitions during the cold months and the unabated settlement expansion that is still being officially authorized. The unprecedented rise in violent attacks by settlers against the Palestinian population must also end. Although different, what is being done against the Palestinian people seems to me to be a version of the hideous policy of apartheid.

This untenable situation highlights the urgent need for the resumption of a genuine peace process that can yield tangible results in the foreseeable future. So far the endless negotiations between two very unequal partners have not borne fruit. What we need is a renewed sense of solidarity to inspire political will, courage and a broader perspective of the conflict. This should include the revival of the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

The international community should spare no effort in assisting both Israelis and Palestinians to reach a solution that will fulfill the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The United Nations has an ongoing responsibility to resolve the question of Palestine in all its aspects and in accordance with international law. Let us be sure that this not become a permanent responsibility.

The enmity between our Palestinian and Israeli brothers and sisters is a bitter and self-perpetuating tragedy. We must find new ways to defuse this enmity, to enable both peoples to reassert their historic bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. I urge the international community to defuse the political deadlock that cynically perpetuates this hatred, isolation and abuse. Our solidarity must prompt concrete action to realize those elusive rights that most of us can take for granted.

Thank you.