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Statement by  
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Of  
**The Syrian Arab Republic**

At  
***The General Debate***

Of the  
***61<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly***

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Madame President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate you and your fraternal country, Bahrain on your election to the presidency of the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. You are the first Arab woman ever to assume this high position. Your selection to this post is a proof that the empowerment of women has become an integral part of the Arab experience. I shall be remiss if I fail to express to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson our sincere appreciation for the efforts he made to bring about a successful conclusion to the work of the previous session. I would also like to express our thanks to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations for his efforts to lead this organization during the past five years. We appreciate the constructive effort he exerted during his last visit to the region.

Madame President,

For decades, the Middle East region has been the stage for many daunting challenges. It has endured the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories that has continued since 1967, and the denial of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The peoples of our region have lost the hope to realize their aspirations to justice, peace and security.

A little while ago, Israel launched its destructive war against Lebanon. The Palestinian situation under the grip of Israeli occupation continues to deteriorate. Acts of Israeli aggression are on the rise while the rights of the people have been and continue to be trampled under foot. The Palestinians are subjected to a crippling blockade because the advocates of democracy were dissatisfied with the results of the elections in the Palestinian territories.

Our region is in the grips of a volatile situation brought about by a protracted and relentless occupation. There are little or no prospects for change that would hold a promise of a safe, just and stable life to our people. Can we turn the adversity of the current situation into an opportunity that would make it a prelude to the solution rather than a consecration of tension and confrontation? The answer to this important question is essential to understanding the suffering of our peoples. For decades, they have been yearning for the realization of a just and comprehensive peace through a settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict, which will end the occupation, restore rights, and allow for the realization of development objectives. This is the path to take in order to address the root causes of the problems of the region, and the road that must be traveled before talking about a new or a greater Middle East.

The international community must realize that the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab territories is the source of all the problems of the region. It is the origin of the overwhelming anger

consuming its peoples. I wonder is the region destined to live one endless war after another. Can any one expect our people to draw comfort and satisfaction from the occupation of their territories and the violation of their rights? Are they expected to exalt the financiers and supporters of this persistent injustice who can redress it if only they were willing? Is the region destined to endure a new war complementing the war against Lebanon in favor of a new Middle East on which they are harping once again through the birth pangs of bloodshed and destruction instead of embracing the opportunity of opening the door to peace in the region?

Madame President,

The suffering of the Palestinian people continues, and their tragedy was heightened over the years. Some members of the international community got accustomed to dealing with this suffering as if it were a natural disaster, not an unprecedented humanitarian and national tragedy. We in Syria are a witness to this tragedy in all its aspects, and are influenced by its repercussions. We support the efforts of our Palestinian brothers to unite their ranks, and encourage them to form a government of national unity. The suffering of our people in the Occupied Syrian Golan continues as well, and all of us Syrians suffer because of this occupation. From this rostrum, I salute the struggle and steadfastness of our people in the Golan and in Palestine in the face of the Israeli policies of terrorism and tyranny.

It is extremely important for the international community to recognize that the deep-rooted anger and resentment consuming

our region, particularly after the senseless war against Lebanon, and the continued logjam in the efforts for peace constitute a dangerous and critical situation and can only lead to confrontation instead of peace. This will not serve the interests of anyone inside or outside the region. We too want a new Middle East, one where a just and comprehensive peace prevails based on right, justice, and on guaranteeing the same security to all.

Fifteen years ago, Syria declared that the establishment of a just and permanent peace was its strategic choice. It took part in the peace process that began in Madrid based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the principle of land for Peace. Our negotiations continued, but did not bear fruits. The Syrian Golan continues to be under occupation, and peace remains elusive. It was clear beyond any doubt that the Israeli political will to make peace was non-existent. Peacemaking, Ladies and Gentlemen, first requires the political will, to be followed by the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Madame President,

Israel launched a brutal war against Lebanon destroying life and treasure. Thanks to the courageous Lebanese resistance, its honorable steadfastness and the unity among the ranks of the Lebanese people, Lebanon warded off the aggression and defeated the aggressor. The Security Council ultimately adopted its long awaited resolution 1701, and my country Syria said it would cooperate with the United Nations to implement all its relevant

provisions. Syria adopted the necessary measures to control its borders with fraternal Lebanon. Syria, which is committed to Lebanon's independence and sovereignty, demands the withdrawal of Israel from all Lebanese occupied territories including from the Lebanese Sheb'a farms. We hope that Lebanon will be able to overcome the consequences of the Israeli aggression through the unity of its people, and the assistance provided by its brothers, friends and the international community so that it will recover and be prosperous again. I stress here Syria's commitment to the establishment of good relations with Lebanon in the interest of the two fraternal countries and peoples.

Madame President,

On the other side of the Syrian borders, Iraq is enduring extremely distressing circumstances that are a cause of serious concern to us as both brothers of Iraq and as a neighboring country. Syria supported the political process in Iraq. I reaffirm today our support to the Iraqi government that came to power after elections in which all the stripes and factions of the Iraqi people participated. We express Syria's readiness to cooperate with this government in all fields. We support the Iraqi government's plan for national reconciliation. We stand ready to provide all the necessary support because we are committed to the unity of Iraq and its people. Drawing up a schedule for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq is essential, since it will assist in curbing the violence and ensuring the safety and security of its citizens. Syria, which mourns every drop of Iraqi blood that is shed, repeats

its condemnation of all the terrorist acts that have been and continue to be perpetrated in Iraq, resulting in a high toll among innocent Iraqi citizens.

Madame President,

Five years have passed since the September 11 terrorist criminal act that left thousands of innocent people dead. I repeat our condemnation of this act and sympathy with the victims of this heinous terrorist crime. To the American people who were the force behind great scientific achievements that were of service to humanity I say: you are the victims of policies that were proven wrong in the Arab and other regions of the world. Many innocent people in places so distant from the United States of America have unfortunately paid the price of these failed policies. Tragically enough, we all end up paying the price when the decision makers in Washington believe that they know better, and are in a better position to understand and grasp the needs and circumstances of the Arabs. They diagnose the ambitions and aspirations of the Arab individual in a manner that is tailored to their own vision. The fact though is that we, the people of the region, know our circumstances and the priorities of the millions angered by the denial of their sovereign national rights. If anyone asks the angry millions about their priorities and objectives, the sure answer would be: **“we want an end to the Israeli occupation of our lands in Palestine, Lebanon and the Golan. We want to recover all our usurped rights. We want the flow of American weapons**

**to Israel, which are sowing death destruction to stop. We refuse hegemony over our resources and interference in our affairs. We want a Middle East governed by peace and built on right and justice, a Middle East where people can dedicate their energies and resources to development and progress and embrace the positive trends of current human endeavors”.**

Madame President,

Years after the war on terror began, one asks has the world become a safer place? It is clear that the war did not achieve its objectives, and that terror has become more widespread. This could be explained by the fact that the exclusive use of force in facing up to terrorism is useless unless the root-causes of terrorism are addressed. We must mobilize the efforts of the international community to deal with this dangerous scourge taking into account the need to distinguish between fighting terrorism, and people’s legitimate right to resist foreign occupation.

We believe that the war on terror was misused at times. It looked as if it was masking the clash of cultures and civilizations, a fact that eventually proved detrimental not only to the interests of all parties concerned, but also played into the hands terrorists and the cause of terrorism.

Madame President,

Israel is the sole power in possession of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. It refuses to adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to submit to the comprehensive safeguards



regime of the IAEA. This poses a threat to peace and security in the region. On December 29, 2003, Syria submitted to the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group a draft resolution to rid the Middle East region from all weapons of mass destruction. We still hope to adopt this resolution as soon as possible. My country joins many others, namely developing countries who expressed concern over the restrictions of access by member states, particularly developing countries to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Madame President,

In conclusion, I stress that the Middle East stands at a cross roads, and has the option of either taking the road of justice, peace and security, or be faced even more than before with tensions and confrontations that would not be in the interest of any party inside or outside the region. It is up to the parties concerned to understand the danger inherent in turning our backs to the road not yet taken, the road of peace. Everything hinges also on the active role that our international organization must play to maintain international peace and security, beginning with the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. I am hopeful that objectivity and the desire for peace will trump other options so that the Middle East can be ushered into a new, secure and prosperous era after decades of suffering.

Thank you for your attention.