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*Statement by*

*H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen)*

*delivered by*

*H.E. Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Minister of Foreign Affairs*

*before the*

*High-Level Plenary of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly*

*16 September 2005*

*United Nations, New York*

**Original: Arabic**

**Check Against Delivery**

P R E S S R E L E A S E

**Co-Presidents of the Summit,  
Excellencies, Chairmen and Members of Delegations,**

**Mr. Secretary General,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I stand before you today, as a representative of my people, conveying their message and carrying their pain, their hopes and their trust in your commitment to solving their cause, which has been before the General Assembly for 58 years now. It is for this noble cause that the late leader, President Yasser Arafat, stood before you for the first time in 1974 and delivered his historic speech for the sake of his people and for the sake of peace and security in the region.

We in Palestine face today two historic tasks and we are determined to fulfill them: the task of achieving independence and peace and the task of development and the building of our state institutions.

The first priority, therefore, is to end the occupation and achieve freedom. The way to end the occupation is clear. It has been defined by the numerous resolutions of international legitimacy and the steps towards its achievement were laid down in the Road Map, which has received international consensus and was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003). The goal, as elaborated in the Arab Peace Initiative and the vision of President Bush, is the achievement of peace on the basis of the two-state solution: Palestine and Israel, based on the Armistice Line of 1949.

As we strive to achieve independence and statehood, we are working to promote a culture of peace and to reject violence and eliminate its causes, for we want to build a society that transforms the suffering of the Palestinian people throughout the decades into a creative energy for building, whereby the Palestinian cause will become an example of democracy and progress, and not a tool abused by those who want to exploit the feelings of the oppressed in the world and encourage terrorism or create a conflict between civilizations.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today, we have before us an opportunity to re-launch the peace process, an opportunity provided in the aftermath of the disengagement in the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank, which we dealt with positively, despite the fact that it was unilateral, and indeed we succeeded in ensuring that it was completed in a quiet and secure manner.

It is incumbent upon Israel to turn this unilateral withdrawal into a positive step in a real way. We must quickly resolve all outstanding major issues, including the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, the airport and the seaport, as well as the establishment of a direct link between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Without this, Gaza will remain a huge prison. The Sharm el-Sheikh understandings must also be implemented and Israel must withdraw to its pre- 28 September 2000 positions and release the prisoners and create an atmosphere of hope and trust.

However, any serious revival of the peace process cannot be achieved without the complete cessation of all settlement activities, the construction of the Wall, and the continued dissection of the West Bank, transforming it into isolated cantons and scattered islands, particularly in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the key to peace. East Jerusalem is the capital of our state. Its siege and encirclement by the separation Wall, its isolation from its surroundings, the destruction of its means of life and the deprivation of its Palestinian citizens – both Muslim and Christian – from access to their holy places can only destroy the foundations of peace.

Partnership is the key to success in all steps, because unilateral policies, even if they partially succeed, their success will only be temporary and definitely not comprehensive. Therefore, the best way to achieve progress is to proceed immediately to final status negotiations to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in such a way that guarantees the establishment of the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just and agreed-upon resolution of the plight of the refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (1948).

#### **Excellencies, Co-Presidents of the Summit,**

Upon my election as the President of the Palestinian National Authority, we reached a national agreement to achieve calm unilaterally, which lasted despite repeated provocations.

We also launched a comprehensive process to unify and rehabilitate our destroyed security apparatus, and we have achieved considerable progress despite the obstacles that we have faced. In parallel, we initiated a reform process that will provide the infrastructure for the establishment of a modern democratic Palestinian state. We held municipal elections and have begun preparations for legislative elections, which will be held early next year, with a view to firmly establishing the foundation for pluralism, democracy and the peaceful transfer of authority.

We have made important accomplishments in the reform and development of our governmental institutions and our financial system to prepare for the economic development project that we aspire to establish and that we will work with the international community to achieve. In this context, I must express my gratitude to all brotherly and friendly States for their continuous support as well as for that which transpired at the London Conference and the G-8 Summit. Our people hope that this support will be increased, because peace cannot be achieved under poverty and development cannot be achieved under occupation.

#### **Co-Presidents of the Summit,**

Allow me to take this opportunity to affirm our conviction in Palestine in the necessity for a strong and reformed United Nations, including its Security Council, in order to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We affirm as well the necessity for compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and international law, particularly with regard to the protection of human rights, freedom and dignity, so that the international community may be able to cope with the challenges, which face all of us, such as foreign occupation, international terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, hunger and epidemic diseases.

Finally, we affirm that we, particularly in the Middle East, now stand at a crossroads: either we achieve real and effective progress towards peace, stability, security, construction and co-existence or return to the vicious cycle, under the constant threat of violence and terrorism, distant from the real and necessary solutions for the challenges that we face. I am confident that you will push for the first option.

Thank you.