Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan
Permanent Representative of Pakistan
in the Debate of the General Assembly on
Agenda Item 35 - “The situation in the Middle
East” and
Agenda Item 36 - “The Question of Palestine”

November 24, 2014

Mr. President,

Today, Pakistan expresses its full solidarity with the people of Palestine. The people of Pakistan steadfastly stand by Palestine in its quest for the fulfillment of its legitimate aspirations for the realization of the right to self-determination and full statehood.

The Palestinians continue to pass through a dark chapter in their history. But the Palestinians and the international community must not lose hope.
Today as we speak, our hearts go out to the Gazans who suffered so grievously this past summer.

We condemn the recent acts of desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, attacks against worshippers and the use of weapons and bombs inside the mosque by the Israeli army. The mosque was closed to worshipers, for the first time since 1967. Restrictions on worship that continue must end. Steps to erase Palestinian, Muslim and Christian heritage must be halted.

Last year, the General Assembly declared 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

As the Secretary General reports, the year started with a “great sense of hope” but ended with return to violence. The peace process broke down and prospects of peace have further diminished.

The massive settlements that increased by 150% during the last year and culminated in the largest
land grab in three decades - doomed the faint hope for peace right from the beginning.

The 50-day spate of violence in Gaza over the summer, which left more than 2,100 Palestinians dead, exacerbated the humanitarian plight of Gazans who were already food insecure and dependent on aid.

We welcome the establishment of a Board of Inquiry by the Secretary General and a Commission of Inquiry by the Human Rights Council to look into the events of Gaza.

These are steps in the right direction but a lot would depend on whether they would be allowed to complete their inquiries or whether their recommendations would be implemented at all.

Over the past year, destruction, demolitions and forced displacements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem increased by 24%.

The impact of Israeli restrictions on the movement of Palestinian people and goods led to the decline of
economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from an average of 11% a few years ago to a mere 1.5% last year.

All this, Mr. President, depicts the dire situation of the Palestinian people.

**Mr. President,**

Revitalization of the peace process would bring fleeting hope, but without a sincere commitment to peace, dialogue for the sake of dialogue will serve no purpose.

So far the efforts of the international community, the Security Council and this Assembly to revive the peace process have failed. The initiatives of the Quartet and the Arab League have not been productive.

Questions are being raised about the viability and relevance of a two-state solution.
We commend Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Secretary of State John Kerry for investing political capital and energy in the process.

We especially thank the Secretary General for his energetic diplomacy to defuse the crisis in Gaza and to channel humanitarian aid to the devastated areas.

Mr. President,

This dark moment in the history of the Middle East question must be changed into a defining moment. For that, the prevalent paradigm of strategic thinking and calculations has to change.

Both sides and the international community have to realize that it is now or never. Violence will offer no solution. The parties should step back to reflect, make hard choices, and give peace a chance.
Direct negotiations, based on internationally agreed parameters, with clear benchmarks and timelines are the only option.

The only path to viable and sustainable peace is the establishment of the State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Until this realization sinks in, peace would remain elusive.

Vacation of all Arab lands by Israel, including the Syrian Golan, is imperative for peace in the Middle East.

**Mr. President,**

**There have been positive developments too.** Sweden has recognized Palestine. The British, Irish and Spanish Parliaments have voted for Palestinian statehood. The French Parliament is contemplating to do so. This is a growing trend and the writing on the wall. Other states will follow suit.

The Security Council has a draft resolution on its table that could pave the way for a clearly marked
pathway to peace. It would bring the Council back at
the helm of maintaining peace and security.

We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to
influence the future of the next generations of their
states and the region. They must start talks for
enduring peace.

In the meantime, the following steps should be
urgently taken:

- The blockade of Gaza should be lifted.
- Demolitions of Palestinian houses and
  expulsion of Palestinians from their properties
  must stop.
- All Palestinian prisoners must be released.
- Pledges for the reconstruction of Gaza should
  be honored by contributors and donors. In this
  context, we pay tribute to UNRWA for its solid
  plans for recovery and reconstruction and for
  the sacrifices it has rendered.

Mr. President
The Government of Pakistan is contributing US $ 1 million to UNRWA. We hope that this would help alleviate in small measure the suffering of the Palestinian victims of the Israeli military offensive in Gaza.