STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON AGENDA ITEM 36: QUESTION OF PALESTINE

NEW YORK, 24 NOVEMBER 2014

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Fode Seck, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his earlier statement. Malaysia aligns itself with the statements made by Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. President,

2. My delegation appreciates the indispensable work carried out by the Committee, the Secretariat's Division for Palestinian Rights, and the other organs within the United Nations system, relating to the question of Palestine. We commend the commitment, efforts and contribution of the Secretary-General and the United Nations in this regard, and we hope that they will persevere with their mandate and carry out their responsibilities faithfully, towards achieving a just and lasting peace in the region.

3. Malaysia applauds the efforts taken by the Committee in commemorating the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People every year. The successful organization of activities in cooperation with Governments, United Nations bodies, parliamentarians, intergovernmental and civil society organizations had increased the international awareness of the question of Palestine. My delegation welcomes the recognition of Palestine by the Parliaments of the United Kingdom and Spain, as we heard during last Friday's International Meeting of Parliamentarians organized by the Committee. We also welcome the recognition of Palestine by the Government of Sweden, bringing the total number of countries which have done so to 135, which is more than two-thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Today,
Malaysia also joins the international community in observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Mr. President,

4. The question of Palestine has been before the United Nations for more than six decades, yet we are still nowhere near in resolving the conflict and achieving just and durable peace between Palestine and Israel. Malaysia reaffirms its long-standing commitment in supporting Palestine’s continuous efforts for self-determination, sovereignty and independence, underpinned by the various international principles and laws. In this regard, Malaysia reiterates its full support on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people for an independent State of Palestine with the realization of two States, based on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, living in peace and security.

5. Malaysia had commended the establishment of the Palestinian Unity Government, and we reiterate our unstinting support on their efforts towards self-determination and statehood. We hope that all Member States will support the Unity Government administration of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. Malaysia welcomes the assurances by President Abbas that the Government would continue to abide by the Palestine Liberation Organization commitments with regard to recognition of Israel, non-violence and adherence to previous agreements.

6. However, we were alarmed on the rise of violence which had erupted in Jerusalem, including the recent attacks at the places of worship in the Holy City which resulted in the loss of innocent civilian lives. The life of each human being, be it man, woman or child, is sacred and precious, and must be protected. Any acts of violence inflicted upon innocent civilians in this conflict, be they Palestinians or Israelis, are therefore unacceptable, and deserve equal criticism and rejection from us all. In this regard, we also condemn Israel’s continued invasion by military force into the compound of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which has long been recognised as a holy site for both Muslims and Christians.

7. Malaysia further condemns Israel’s continued building of illegal settlements in Palestinian lands, including in East Jerusalem, which is further weakening the possibility of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In spite of the provocations of the occupying Power, Malaysia appreciates the readiness and commitments from the State of Palestine to continue negotiations, and the same spirit should be emulated by Israel. We therefore urge the international community to further demand Israel to immediately cease its illegal settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territory, before the viability of a two-State solution is completely eroded.
Mr. President,

8. Let me now turn to the situation in the Gaza Strip, which had deteriorated following the outbreak of hostilities last summer. The reports of the Committee and the Secretary-General contain very alarming accounts, revelations and stark realities about the situation on the ground. After 51 days of Israel's military aggression of Gaza between July and August 2014, 2,189 Palestinians, including 513 children were killed, more than 108,000 Palestinians were left homeless and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. Israeli security forces also destroyed thousands of crucial social and economic infrastructures including UNRWA schools, which had been used as shelters for displaced persons. Malaysia is deeply saddened by the unbearable suffering that the Palestinian people, particularly those in Gaza, have had to endure as the result of Israel's atrocities and violations of international humanitarian laws.

9. The long-term ceasefire agreement between Israel and Palestine, brokered by the Egyptian Government on 26 August 2014, was therefore a much-needed development which Malaysia had welcomed. We had also called on both parties to honour the agreement, with the hope that this ceasefire agreement would pave the way for both sides to resume direct negotiations to ensure a lasting peace in the region. My delegation believes that stronger political will at the highest levels from all parties are needed to further encourage a more constructive dialogue.

10. My delegation notes from the reports before us, with deep concern, that the scale of the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza is unprecedented. Food, clean water, sanitation and electricity remain scarce with vast networks having been destroyed by the Israeli aggression. While Israeli settlers even have enough water to run farms, swimming pools and spas, Palestinians continue to struggle to satisfy their daily minimum water requirements. More than 90 per cent of the water extracted from Gaza's sole aquifer has been found unsafe for human consumption, due to high levels of chloride and nitrate, and in some areas, as high as six times of the limit set by the World Health Organization. We urge the international community to continue to provide generous support to all United Nations bodies and other organizations working on the ground, to alleviate the catastrophic conditions and to expedite rebuilding efforts of vital necessities.

11. Malaysia also urges all Member States to continue to put pressure on Israel to demand an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza, in order to enable a legitimate and sustained flow of persons and goods, including construction materials, humanitarian aid and commercial flows. Exports from Gaza to the West Bank, to Israel, and to the outside world should be
allowed to resume, permitting the economy to reestablish itself and recover. My delegation firmly believes that the normalization of the situation in Gaza would significantly reduce tensions, and facilitate the resumption of the political process.

12. However, let me be clear – normalization does not mean that the citizens of Gaza will continue to live in a de-facto open air prison. Nor does it mean an indefinite extension of the 47-year occupation of Palestinian territories and the continued building by illegal settlements by Israel. Indeed, to use a term which has been used repeatedly in recent months, normalization does not mean a return to the status quo ante. Normalization to us means the realization and fulfilment of the inalienable rights of all the Palestinian people, and for them to live the normal lives that many of us enjoy – in peace, freedom, dignity, and ultimately, in a land which they can call their own.

Mr. President,

13. As a member of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Malaysia fully endorses the Committee’s report and its recommendations. My delegation is also pleased to co-sponsor all resolutions under this important agenda item.

14. To conclude, Mr. President, my delegation reiterates that direct talks and negotiations between Palestine and Israel is the only way to ensure long-term peace, security and stability in the region. No effort should be spared to achieve long-overdue freedom, justice, peace and dignity for the Palestinian people.

Thank you Mr. President.