Mr Chairman,

My country stands up for what is right and what is just. We speak out against discrimination and unequal treatment. And we highlight global imbalances and suffering. This is why the Maldives, year after year, raises its voice, loud and clear, on the plight of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the Occupied Syrian Golan. My delegation would like to thank the Secretary General for his report on this important agenda item.

The Middle East conflict is one mired with political rhetoric and injustices; one of precedents and prejudices. Yet, we forget that this conflict has primarily a human face. As the report of the Secretary General highlights in every line, discriminatory practices and policies have adversely affected the living conditions of the Palestinian population with significant and dire impacts on the social and economic sectors as well as the Palestinian natural resources and environment. Once again, the report highlights the numerous violations of international law and UN resolutions including the accelerated construction of Israeli settlements, the construction of the wall, the exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, the increased demolition of homes, economic institutions, agricultural lands and infrastructure, the revocation of residency rights of Palestinians, and the continuing Israeli policy of closures and severe restrictions on the access to goods and persons in particular the Gaza blockade which serves as a collective punishment. East Jerusalem and the West Bank have effectively been segregated and isolated from the processes its inhabitants need to survive. The international community would not and should not tolerate this. Yet even today, Israel has announced new plans to build homes in occupied East Jerusalem, which will undoubtedly put more strain on the natural resources and subsequently the lives of the Palestinians in that region.

The continued lack of access to basic needs and infrastructure for those suffering from occupation in the Palestinian territories is indicative of malice rather than neglect. Israel controls almost all of Palestinian water resources with only 11% available for use by the Palestinians. There are inadequate sanitation facilities. And
solid waste is dumped without restriction on Palestinian lands, fields and side roads making the lands useless for agriculture and constituting a threat to the environment.

According to the report, 78% of Palestinians living in the Jerusalem district and 84% of the children live below the poverty line. 40% of the male Arab population and 85% of the female population do not participate in the labour market. In the past year alone, 268 Palestinian were killed and 4,483 others were injured. 42 of those killed were children. During the same period, 3 Israeli civilians were killed and 279 injured with 3 Israeli children killed. Each of these lives lost, has a family, has a history, had hopes and dreams that are now lost. As a community of nations, that have pledged to uphold the rule of law, that have signed up to conventions and covenants that demand social justice to all, we have a legal and moral obligation to address injustice and suffering where we see it.

In the occupied Syrian Golan, unequal access to basic resources, such as water, disadvantage farmers and residents. The exploitation of the occupied natural resources and the lack of access to land, housing and discriminatory laws continue to impede the growth of the Syrian residents and the economy of the occupied Syrian Golan.

Mr Chairman,

Efforts to resolve this humanitarian crisis are coupled closely with efforts to solve the political crisis. It is only through the firm recognition of the State of Palestine, with territorial integrity and sovereignty over its land and natural resources, that social harmony, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development can be realized. The Maldives reaffirms its solidarity with the Palestinian Authority and supports the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to their natural resources.

The Maldives believes wholeheartedly in a two state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side and at peace. The Palestinian people have a right to self-determination, the establishment of an independent State based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and sovereignty over their territory and resources. Security for Israel can be achieved only through respect for human rights and the rule of law. The United Nations must take effective action along these lines by promoting permanent peace based on a fair partnership and equality between peoples. It is our earnest hope that the renewed efforts in this regard will go on to resolve the key issues, and bring an end to this 46 year old conflict.

Mr Chairman

Time and time again, we, as an international community, in our national and individual capacities have called on the occupying power to abide by international law, international treaties and relevant UN resolutions; To enable a life of dignity for the people under occupation; To give them their basic rights to water, sanitation, to basic infrastructure and to live a life of peace and security. It is time they listen! Thank you.