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**374th Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

AFRICAN UNION: Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let me start by conveying the greetings from Dr. Knusazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Dr. Knusazana Dlamini Zuma has also requested me to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing this very important meeting.

Today's event is, again, an opportunity to continue to raise the awareness among the international community on the resolved question of Palestine and reiterate our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

I therefore congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and through you, Ambassador Fodé Sec, the Permanent Representative of Senegal and the members of the bureau for your leadership, and also commend the committee for its work in general.

Mr. Chairman, today's gathering reflects the desire of the international community to see the conclusion of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict with the final peace agreement. Sadly, all regional and international efforts to reinvigorate the peace process did not yet succeed in bringing the progress we are all looking for.

The failure of peace talks led to an intensification of violence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The continued conflict in the occupied territories resulted in the deaths of hundreds and injury of thousand Palestinian civilians, including children, women, elderly and humanitarian workers.

Mr. Chairman, the conditions on the ground remain volatile. And the situation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is still a source of serious concern. In light of the recent violent incidents that led to civilian deaths and injuries, we strongly condemn all acts of violence against civilians and attacks against religious sites. We call upon all parties to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from proactive actions and incitement.

In addition, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains critical, with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods continue to undermine the living conditions of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza. Therefore, the blockade and the siege should be lifted.

The African Union reaffirms the sanctity of Islamic and Christian shrines in Jerusalem and warn against the serious consequences of such Israeli measures in the occupied Israel -- in Jerusalem, such as the judaization of that Arab city and obliteration of its Islamic and Christian identity, as well as denying Muslims and Christians access to their holy places of worship, occupied with repeated attempts to divide the Al Aqsa mosque from bills passed by the Israeli Knesset in contravention of all the relevant international norms and resolutions.

Mr. Chairman, regrettably as we meet today, the path towards a durable peace remains uncertain. The peace process now hangs from a thread and the process of rapprochement seems to be slipping away. The lack of progress and the renewed tension requires sustained attention. So our community should continue to support the parties to overcome their differences and return to peace talks within a clear framework, based on internationally recognized parameters.

Mr. Chairman, the Africa Union reiterates its continued support for the Palestinian effort to raise the position of the state of Palestine to that of a full-fledged member of the United Nations. In this regard, we renew our call to those countries of the world that have not yet recognized the state of Palestine to do so.

In this context, we welcome the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on raising the flag of non-member observer states at the United Nations following the flags of the member states of the organization.

Mr. Chairman, as we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we call to the international community and all stakeholders to strengthen their support and assistance to the Palestinian people to ensure the realization of their inalienable rights and establishment of their own viable state and achieve a durable peace in the region. I thank you for your attention.