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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**

PRESIDENT SECURITY COUNCIL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, colleagues. I would like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for inviting me to address this meeting in my capacity as President of the Security Council in November.

The situation in the Middle East remains a key concern for the Security Council, not least, the lack of progress in finding a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Council continues to support actively efforts to achieve the two-state solution. The Council remains fully committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid Terms of Reference, including Land for Peace, the Roadmap for Peace in the Middle East, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Council has continued to receive monthly briefings from the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and from the Department of Political Affairs, and has held open debates on the Middle East on a quarterly basis. The Council had the opportunity to hear directly from the Secretary-General at an emergency meeting on the 21st of October following his visit to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a press statement on the 17th of September, the Council called for the exercise of restraint, refraining from provocative actions and rhetoric and upholding unchanged the historic status quo at the Haram Al Sharif in word and in practice. Members also reiterated the importance of the special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as confirmed in the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

Council members are concerned by the ongoing violence directed at both Israelis and Palestinians. The Council calls on both parties to encourage calm and avoid escalating the situation through word or deed. In this regard, the Council members have expressed their deep concern over Israel settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Many members view these acts as illegal or illegitimate, believing that they do not help promote prospects for peace. They provide a catalyst for further tensions and jeopardize the viability of the two-state solution. The members of the Council call for full respect for international law.

On Gaza, the Council met on the 20th of July to reflect one year on from the hostilities of last summer. Council members are concerned at the lack of progress on the humanitarian situation. Council members welcome the progress of the Tripartite Agreement reached between the UN, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. There is, however, disappointment at the slow pace of reconstruction and agreement that more needs to be done to advance reconstruction efforts, including calling on all donors to fulfill their financial pledges to aid the reconstruction efforts in Gaza without delay.

The Council continues to recognize and commend the vital role played by the UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, along with other United Nations and humanitarian organizations in addressing the critical humanitarian needs in Gaza.

The Security Council applauds the efforts of UNRWA to assist Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, and expresses its hope that the international community will increase its support to UNRWA. Council members welcome donors' additional contributions and steps taken by the Agency itself to reduce the general fund deficit, which helped allow the Agency to better safeguard delivery of its services.

The Council welcomes efforts made by the Quartet to drive forward improvements on the ground. This is vital in the absence of peace talks and if we are to preserve the viability of a negotiated two-state solution that resolves the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Council members also acknowledge the efforts made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Security Council will continue its efforts to build an environment conducive to peace in order to achieve our common goal of a two-state solution and the peace and security the Israeli and Palestinian people both deserve. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.