

30 November 2009

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,
President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express our deep gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important work in promoting the cause of the Palestinian people.

The international day of solidarity with the Palestinian people is a solemn occasion for renewing our commitment to a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, a goal that has eluded us for far too long with disastrous consequences. This day is a reminder that the Question of Palestine remains the oldest unresolved issue at the United Nations. It is an occasion to reflect on the situation, a situation of continued occupation, which has dispossessed the Palestinian people and subjected them to untold suffering and tragedy over the decades. The grave situation in the Occupied Territories particularly in the Gaza Strip jolts us to the human cost of this unresolved conflict borne by Palestinian civilians. Their ordeal will continue until the Question of Palestine is resolved and the occupation is brought to an end.

The continuing Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip has forced 1.5 million Palestinian civilians into poverty and isolation. The Israeli military offensive almost a year ago further exacerbated the already desperate situation. International efforts to rebuild the Gaza Strip and to assist its civilian population are blocked by Israel. The United Nations has repeatedly called on Israel to lift this inhuman and illegal blockade, but Israel continues to impose collective punishment on Gaza's civilian population, in defiance of international law including international humanitarian and human rights law and particularly in breach of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel should heed the call of the international community to bring an immediate end to the stranglehold on the civilian population and lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Earlier this month, the General Assembly endorsed the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, and called on Israel and the Palestinian side to undertake independent, credible investigations, towards ensuring accountability and justice. The report calls upon us to help to bring an end to impunity in the Middle East and to ensure accountability. Without justice, there can be no progress toward peace.

The renewed engagement by President Barack Obama to promote peace in the Middle East has inspired hope. The international community is strongly committed to supporting the peace process. But on the ground, there remain serious obstacles to peace.

The situation in the occupied East Jerusalem remains of grave concern. The continued construction of the illegal separation wall in the Occupied Territory undermines the peace process and violates United Nations resolutions. Continued Israeli actions to change the status of Jerusalem further endanger the viability of a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The excavations in the vicinity of AL-Haram Al-Sharif and the attacks against Palestinian worshipers at the holy sites of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa mosque provoke an already volatile situation in the occupied city. The ongoing construction of settlements in the Occupied Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, where Israel continues to demolish properties, confiscate land and evict Palestinians from their homes must not be tolerated as it constitutes a main impediment to the peace efforts. The recent announcement by Israel to construct 900 new settlement units in Gilo is another such step. Israel must abide by its international obligations and refrain from actions that prejudice permanent status negotiations.

The United Nations has consistently upheld the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and will continue to work for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, international law, the Madrid principles, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. These resolutions and agreements are the building blocks of a Palestinian state and must be implemented.

This afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the agenda item entitled “Question of Palestine”. As President, I would like to reaffirm the Assembly’s position that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Our collective expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people also entails action and responsibility. At this occasion, I call for renewed efforts by the parties, supported by the international community, with the aim of establishing an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

Thank you.