

STATEMENT

BY

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BEFORE

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Mr. President

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this session. We are very hopeful that your work and efforts will be successful.

I would like also to convey through you our appreciation to H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa for the tremendous efforts she undertook during her presidency of the General Assembly in the previous session.

On this occasion I would like to express our full confidence in the role of the United Nations and all its specialized agencies, given its historic responsibility towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects, as it, for many decades, has continued to reaffirm the national and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and to guarantee all kinds of support for our people in the political, economic and humanitarian fields.

We must refer to the exceptional work that has been done and continues to be done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in order to preserve the future for generations of Palestine refugees and to ensure them basic services.

We must also refer to the efforts exerted by other institutions whether they defend the basic human rights of the Palestinian citizens, or extend support to us in educational and cultural fields and in enhancing the role of the Palestinian National Authority since its inception and contributing to the building of our national institutions.

I would also like to thank H.E. the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for placing the question of Palestine at the head of his work priorities and for the high attention he has given to seeking a solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and creatively contributing with us to securing the means that would lead to the re-launching of the peace process.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Confrontations, wars and conflicts in our region and their dangerous and tragic repercussions on the peoples of the regions have become the primary threat to world peace. I call upon the conscience of the entire humanity and the international community to act urgently to radically address these situations without delay. Our experiences over the past years and decades have proven that the policy of delaying the settlement of the major conflicts in our region or partially addressing them just to contain them or to reduce the dangers of these conflicts or to manage them have only led to further complication of the situations and the threat of civil and regional wars and helping terrorism to grow in an environment conducive to it and to spread to regrettably become a global phenomenon.

However, this grim picture should not conceal from our eyes the reality that hope is still alive and that the will of the overwhelming majority of our peoples, supported by the international community, are capable of overcoming the tragic destiny which the forces of occupation, extremism and aggression and war and terrorism in our region want to force us into.

Indeed, there are vital and responsible forces in the Middle East which represent the conscience of their peoples and have a deep desire to move towards liberation, progress and democracy. Though these forces work and struggle in extreme difficulties, they are committed and have the strong will to overcome the current situations and to create a new future for the Middle East in which all of its peoples will enjoy freedom and equality.

There could be no doubt that defending Islam, this religion of moderation, love and human brotherhood, is the responsibility of these vital forces in our region to counter the attempts to defame this monotheistic religion or to portray it in an unfair and distorted manner contrary to its spirit and tenets. Islam is a religion of tolerance against terrorism, killing and assassination. It is a religion of enlightenment against ignorance, darkness and backwardness. It is the religion of openness to the world against closeness and extremism. We all must work together to preserve the mutual human values which we all realize are subject today to violation, aggression and defamation. We must seek broaden human understanding between different religions, cultures and civilizations, because the attempt to spread the spirit of animosity between them is one of the most dangerous means used by international terrorism in the present time. That is why the dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations is necessary today, particularly since all wars, especially the world wars, were not wars between religions and cultures but rather wars of interests.

That reality constitutes only one fragment of the overall picture. Missing opportunities one after another to seriously address the issues of the peoples in the region and to reach fundamental and comprehensive solutions to them, with the question of Palestine at the forefront, will push our peoples towards the precipice of despair and frustration and make them easy prey to the forces of ignorance and extremism.

Is it not time for the international community to seize this opportunity which we have today to move towards re-launching the peace process? And to transform the idea of the international meeting, which has gained, not only the overwhelming support of the Palestinian and Israeli societies but also of the world at large, into a new beginning for negotiations that would lead to an end to the Israeli occupation of our Palestinian territory and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to the achievement of the vision of two States?

Is it not time to establish the independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital and to find a just and agreed upon solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 in order to put an end to their anguish and suffering that had lasted for six decades?

Is it not time to put an end to the policies of colonial expansionism, the seizure of Palestinian lands under different pretexts, the building of the racist separation wall, the imposition of siege, the erection of checkpoints around cities, villages and refugee camps, the continued policies of collective punishment, and the imprisonment of more than 11,300 Palestinians in Israeli jails, some of them imprisoned for more than quarter of a century?

Is it not time for the city of Jerusalem to become a city of true peace for all peoples of faith from all religions, and for Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all actions aimed at altering the character of the sacred city, imposing siege on it and forcing its inhabitants to leave, and desecrating the Christian and Islamic holy places in the city?

Is it not time for Israel to cease its acts of killing, assassinations, dispersion and the destruction of homes and confiscation of lands and homes which are occurring daily?

Is it not time for our people to enjoy freedom and independence in equality with all other peoples and to build their peaceful future side by side with their neighbors, including Israel?

I hope I will not return to this podium next year asking the same questions as there is no obstacle to provide all means of success for the forthcoming peace meeting, particularly since the brotherly Arab countries have shown their true readiness, through the Arab Peace Initiative, to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, which will be beneficial and fruitful to all parties in the region through the development of normal and comprehensive relations when the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory and the other occupied Arab territories has ended and the sovereign and independent Palestine State is established based on the 1967 borders.

It is in this spirit that we look forward to the substance of the proposed meeting and to an invitation for all concerned parties to attend.

Let me frankly state that there is no politician or responsible leader concerned with his people's interests who does not know well the solution between us and our Israeli neighbors that can be achieved and can last. This solution is embodied in the many resolutions adopted throughout the successive sessions of the General Assembly, the initiative of President Bush for the two-State solution - Palestine side by side with Israel, the Road Map which was endorsed in Security Council resolution 1515, the Arab Peace Initiative, and the outcome of negotiations and plans presented by many parties from 2000 and until now.

Hence, from this podium, I address the Israeli Government, with whose Prime Minister Mr. Olmert I had important and in-depth discussion and dialogue, so that we may end the spiraling of lost opportunities and to make the opportunity of the international conference real and substantive. We should go together to this conference holding in our hands clear, detailed and realistic bases to solve all the final status issues, especially Jerusalem, borders, refugees, water and security and other key issues.

From this podium, I wish to reiterate our people's full readiness to be involved in a true peace process that would lead to a comprehensive and complete agreement on all final status issues. We will present this agreement, as we promised, for a popular referendum to all of the Palestinian people - all segments and wherever they may be - so they can give their views and decision on what has been reached. Thus we can fully and strategically preserve the peace.

I would also like to affirm that we will continue to address, in accordance with our basic law and other laws, the coup d'etat that took place in the Gaza Strip, in order to preserve democracy in our country from the ventures of any group which wants to impose by force its control or its own dark ideas and through armed rebellion. Anyone who thinks that our people, who presented throughout decades the martyrs, the wounded and the prisoners for the sake of freedom and independence and the building of a free, progressive and democratic state, would follow those who want to impose by armed force upon them a closed and backward regime and society, is extremely wrong.

Some have attempted in the past to transform the question of Palestine into a card to be used to serve regional interests or to realize expansionist goals or to promote specific ideas and ideologies, disregarding the true interests of the Palestinian people.

But, we are the ones who struggled and devoted all of our lives for the independence of our national decision, for the protection of the interests and rights of our people, and the rejection of occupation and control from any side. We will not allow for the tragedy to happen one more time or for any attempt to manipulate our national destiny to achieve its goals.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I came to this podium to convey the message of a tired people burdened with the wounds of occupation, dispersion, imprisonment and martyrdom. Yet they are also a people imbued with the spirit of human dignity and the faith that their future will be made by their own hands even though their past was determined by those who conspired against them and their rights.

I came to reiterate the words of our eternal leader Yasser Arafat, confident that the olive branch - the branch of peace - which does not fade or die, will not fall from my hand.



I came to convey the pain and suffering of every Palestinian man and woman, every one that lost a martyr or injured, everyone that awaits the freedom of a brother, father, sister or mother in prisons, and those stranded on the Iraqi-Syrian borders and the millions of Palestinians living in their homeland or in refugee camps, affirming that the message of peace delivered by the prophets and bearers of the Divine messages from our land will grow and flourish and that the voice of peace in our country will be louder than any other voice.

For all this, let us move forward hand in hand on the shining path of peace, without narrow agendas or temporary, short-term interests. In conclusion, allow me to address our Palestinian people in the homeland and in the diaspora to tell them that there is an important opportunity on the horizon. Let us together unit to make this a reality so that our people can regain their national, legitimate rights and achieve the peace, prosperity and stability for which we have so long aspired and which our steadfast and patient people so deserve.

We also must work so that peace will come to the peoples who suffer and bleed daily like the brotherly Iraqi people and to the peoples who deserve a secure and stable life within the framework of democracy such as the dear people of Lebanon.

Let us build a stable and cooperative world based on respect for life and the right of peoples to self-determination. I thank you, Mr. President, and I thank all of members of this international organization for their support and positions.