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**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, Agenda Item 37: Question of Palestine, 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 29 November 2011:**  
**(Check against delivery)**

Mr. President,

Allow me to convey Palestine's deep appreciation to you for your skilled leadership and guidance of the important work of the 66<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly.

Today, I also reiterate our abiding appreciation to the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Bureau: Chairman, Ambassador Abdou Salam Diallo of Senegal, Vice-Chairs, Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan and Ambassador Pedro Nunez Mosquera of Cuba, and the Rapporteur, Ambassador Saviour Borg of Malta. We are grateful for the Committee's principled efforts to assist the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, and for their continuing efforts to mobilize international support for the just cause of Palestine and peace via their work at the United Nations and in international conferences held over the course of the year.

We also express appreciation to the Division for Palestinian Rights and Department of Public Information for their cooperative efforts with the Committee and to raising international awareness of the Palestine question. We also reiterate appreciation to the Department of Political Affairs and to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts at the helm of the organization aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

Mr. President,

We gathered this morning to solemnly commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on this day marking the sixty-fourth year since the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 181 (II), which partitioned Palestine into two States and set off a chain of events that dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape and future of the Middle East. While the partition led to establishment of the State of Israel, for more than six decades the independence of the Palestinian Arab State and the rights of the Palestinian people have been unjustly obstructed and denied. From the 1948 *Al-Nakba* - which resulted in the uprooting of the majority of the Palestinian people from their homeland, who now number nearly 5 million Palestine refugees, to the 1967 military occupation by Israel of the remainder of historic Palestine and other Arab lands, to the present day, the conflict borne of that decision continues to gravely impact the lives of the Palestinian people and the prospects for peace and security regionally and globally.

The wound of this tragedy and injustice remains gaping and bleeding, challenging the fundamental ideals and laws on which our international system has been established, for this conflict

has not only caused immense human suffering, but has also undermined the credibility and efficacy of the UN and the legal instruments that Member States are obliged to uphold and respect in all circumstances. In that sense, the loss of the Palestinian people has been a loss for the international community as a whole and will continue to be until the question of Palestine is resolved in all its aspects. That is why we continue to come before the Assembly and all other UN organs, including the Security Council, year after year, appealing for the implementation of UN resolutions and the rule of law, and striving, with the support and solidarity of countries from all over the world, for the realization of justice and the inalienable rights of our people, including their rights to return and to self-determination and freedom. The Palestinian people living under Israel's occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and throughout the Diaspora, including in the refugee camps in the region, continue to look to the international community to urgently redress this grave injustice.

This year, our appeal has taken on a new and significant dimension. For the first time in the history of the Palestinian people, the application of the State of Palestine for admission to United Nations membership has been submitted. On 23 September 2011, President Mahmoud Abbas formally presented Palestine's application to the Secretary-General and came before this august Assembly to appeal to the international community to do justice by the Palestinian people. Palestine's application was immediately transmitted to the Security Council, which convened its "Committee on the Admission of New Members" to consider the application and issued a report (S/2011/705 of 11 November 2011), which regrettably reflects a lack of consensus among the Council members to recommend Palestine for membership. Despite this outcome, Palestine will remain unwavering in its appeals and its bilateral and multilateral efforts for the recognition of its historic, natural and legal right to independence and to be a UN Member State.

We believe that it is high time for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities vis-à-vis the question of Palestine. This includes our call, supported by many Member States, for the Council to make a positive recommendation to the General Assembly for Palestine's admission based on the merits of our application and our fulfillment of the criteria defined by the Charter. In this regard, we firmly believe that good faith actions undertaken at the UN - the center of multilateral activity in our world - can and should contribute towards actualizing the two-State solution and will not obstruct this objective. In fact, what is preventing progress towards that solution and destroying its viability is the deliberate, insidious and illegal Israeli settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around East Jerusalem, and not by any means our peaceful, legal and political efforts.

Of course, we are fully aware of the difficulties of the process in the Security Council due to an unfair negative stance against our application. The Palestinian leadership is thus considering all options at this critical juncture, focused on the rights of the Palestinian people and goal of peace and security. In this regard, we reiterate: 1. there is no contradiction between the Quartet efforts to resume negotiations between the two sides and the Council's responsible consideration of Palestine's application, and 2. the Palestinian leadership's commitment to peace negotiations is unquestionable.

Likewise, Palestine's achievement of membership in UNESCO, which received wide support, does not contradict the efforts to revive the peace process and is a positive reflection of the international position vis-à-vis Palestine and its status in the international community. In fact, all of these processes - whether in the Security Council, in the General Assembly, or at the negotiating table - share the objective of the two-State solution of Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and must be viewed as mutually reinforcing and

necessary. We thus continue on this path towards realization of the rights and national aspirations of the Palestinian people and Palestine's rightful inclusion in the community of nations.

Mr. President,

International support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people are traditionally highlighted on this day. Yet, such support is honorably extended to Palestine year round by peace loving nations, civil society and peoples worldwide, and for this we are deeply grateful. It has helped our people to maintain resilience and alleviate the hardships caused by the massive oppression and violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power. Moreover, it has helped to safeguard our rights and hopes for a solution to the plight of our people, including for the plight of the Palestine refugees on the basis of resolution 194 (III), and for the achievement of peace, justice and stability.

The political, economic and moral support and assistance extended to Palestine is invaluable. We are proud that, to date, at least 130 countries have recognized the State of Palestine. These countries have taken a principled stand in support of our people's right to self-determination, consistent with the relevant UN resolutions, from resolution 181 (II) in 1947 to subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. We are immensely grateful for their recognition and support, which is an investment in peace in accordance with the two-State solution.

We reaffirm our abiding gratitude to the more than one hundred countries that recognized Palestine from the time of the Declaration of Independence in 1988, as well as our profound gratitude to those countries that in this past year made the decision to recognize Palestine, beginning with Brazil in December of last year and all the other friendly countries that recognized thereafter from South America, to Central America, to the Caribbean, to Africa, to Asia. They did so in line with their moral, legal and political responsibilities and we recognize their valuable contribution to the just cause of Palestine and the cause of peace between Palestine and Israel. In this connection, we also recognize the important efforts of the League of Arab States, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and African Union, and we continue to appeal to countries to recognize the State of Palestine.

At the same time, over the past two years, there has been real progress in the building and strengthening of Palestinian national institutions with the implementation of the Palestinian Authority's two-year plan to prepare for the independence of our State, an extensive project whose success was significantly enhanced by the strong support of numerous donor countries. In spite of the obstacles and severe dysfunctions caused by the Israeli occupation, this initiative has made remarkable strides, as affirmed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the UN and the AHLC, which reaffirmed that we are ready for independence with viable, effective institutions that are above the threshold for a functioning State.

Thus, our efforts entered a new phase this year, firmly rooted in the recognition of the inalienable right of our people to self-determination and their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-June 1967 borders. This is the core of the two-State solution for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on which there is international consensus. And the global acknowledgement of the urgency of achieving the two-State solution, which is being gravely threatened by the occupying Power's illegal actions, surely prompted the series of State recognitions accorded to Palestine in the preceding months of this year as well as the proposal by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the growing support by governments and civil

society, and the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011 and subsequent efforts by all concerned parties to resume credible negotiations between the two sides.

The revival of peace negotiations, however, has proven to be elusive. It is a fact that the peace process has repeatedly failed for this reason: Israel's relentless breaches of the law and refusal to commit to the fundamental parameters of the peace process based on the relevant UN resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land-for-peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Roadmap. For nearly two decades, the negotiations undertaken by the Palestinian side in a spirit of historic compromise have been undermined by Israel's gross violations that are in total contradiction to the agreed principles and goals of the peace process. Moreover, the constant provocations and ludicrous, insulting pretexts given by the Israeli government for continuation of these illegal policies and the threats and incitement against the Palestinian people and their leadership continue to deepen mistrust and stoke tensions, making the prospects of serious negotiations even more remote.

The consequences, however, have not been borne by the occupying Power, which continues to act with total arrogance and impunity while the international community continues to fail to hold it accountable. Instead, the consequences have been borne by generations of Palestinians, who continue to suffer the hardships of ongoing dispossession and the brutality of the Israeli occupation in all its manifestations - including the illegal colonization campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly Occupied East Jerusalem, which is marked by constantly expanding settlements and the Wall and the confiscation of land and which is destroying the contiguity, unity and integrity of the Territory and severing East Jerusalem from the rest of the Territory; Israeli military raids and attacks against the defenseless civilian population, including rising acts of terror, violence and destruction by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and properties; the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, including children and women, whose full release we continue to demand; the illegal, inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip for nearly five years; and innumerable other measures of collective punishment and systematic human rights violations against the entire Palestinian population, civilians who are entitled to protection under international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, the consequences have been borne by the region, which continues to be plagued by the insecurity and turmoil caused by this conflict, which has also prevented normal development in the region. And, the consequences have been borne by the international community, which continues to bear the wide impact of the tensions and instability of the region and continues, to no avail, to expend vast efforts and resources to alleviate the conflict's impact and ultimately resolve it.

The resulting situation is totally unsustainable and, in the absence of a political horizon and hope, we are facing a precipice.

Mr. President,

It cannot be lost on this Assembly that the very State created by its resolution 181 (II) - Israel - continues to deny the existence of the nation of Palestine and the rights of her people. And it is that State which continues to thwart all initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict according to international law and relevant UN resolutions. This injustice must be directly and urgently redressed.

Despite Israel's intransigence and escalation of violations, the Palestinian leadership remains committed to the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and committed to the peace process, as is the international community in its entirety. As reflected in the past several months, the

Palestinian leadership continues to undertake non-violent, peaceful, diplomatic and political efforts to advance the rights of the Palestinian people and achieve the two-State solution.

We now renew our appeal for Member States to stand with us for right and to answer the call of history. A historic moment is before us for Member States to act to uphold the Charter and their legal obligations. It is a moment to live up to responsibility to fulfill the promise made to the Palestinian people decades ago and the pledges of the past and the present to bring an end to this protracted conflict to finally allow the Palestinian people to live in freedom and dignity.

The Israeli Government must be held responsible for its violations and obstruction of peace. The onus must be placed on the occupying Power. Israel must prove that it is a peace-loving State and is ready to abandon its aggressive occupier mentality and greedy expansionism and commit to peace. It must abide by its obligations under international law, including under the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, and relevant UN resolutions. It must realize that its subjugation of the Palestinian people will never be accepted, and it must recognize the right of our people to live in freedom in their homeland. It must end its blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has so traumatized our people and disfigured the fabric of our society. It must prove that it is willing and able to take the steps necessary to bring an end to all of the crimes perpetrated in the name of its 44-year military occupation, including all settlement activities, and to ultimately bring this occupation to an end. It must commit to the parameters of the peace process and prove that it is ready and able to negotiate in good faith all core final status issues - refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security and water - with the aim of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting solution and that will lead to true peace and coexistence.

Mr. President,

We are at a crossroads, and the international community's role at this moment is pivotal. We call on Member States to find the political will and the courage to uphold their responsibilities and to restore hope to and advance the cause of peace, an objective made even more imperative in light of the dramatic changes occurring in our region. With a commitment to international law and the principles of peace, justice and security, it will be possible to overcome the impasse and finally resolve the question of Palestine. But the window of opportunity is narrowing, and we must act now.

The Palestinian leadership is determined to bring an end to the injustice endured by our people. We are committed to the achievement of reconciliation and national unity among all our people, so vital for advancing Palestinian national aspirations. We are determined to peacefully achieve the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the pre-1967 borders, living side by side with Israel in peace and security. We are grateful for the strong support of the international community, and urge that no effort be spared at this critical time to make this a reality. I thank you, Mr. President.