



UNITED NATIONS

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN MEETING IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

The urgency of realizing a two-State solution

Montevideo, 29 and 30 March 2011

Concluding Remarks by the Organizers

1. The **United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace** was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Montevideo on 29 and 30 March 2011. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian, representatives of United Nations Members States and Observers, parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society, academic institutions and the media.
2. The objective of the Meeting, at this time of continued efforts at restarting the Israeli-Palestinian political process, was to encourage broad international action, including by Latin American and Caribbean States, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and for achieving a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. The Meeting, among other things, looked at obstacles and opportunities on the road to achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It examined support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Meeting also discussed the role of non-governmental actors in Latin America and the Caribbean in promoting a permanent settlement of the conflict.
3. The Organizers and the participants appreciated the opening remarks by the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, H. E. Mr. Luis Almagro, and associated themselves with his call for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the recognition of the State of Palestine. They welcomed the message by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his principled position on the illegality of the settlements, his call for ceasing all settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and his pledge to support the efforts at achieving a two-State solution. The Organizers shared the assessment of the Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Saeb Erakat, who, in his keynote presentation, stressed that there was no alternative to the two-State solution. A just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was of critical global interest and constituted an important element for stability and prosperity in the Middle East.

4. The Organizers shared the utmost concern expressed by many participants about the alarming escalation of violence on the ground. They strongly condemn the killing and wounding of Palestinian civilians, including children, by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip. They also reiterate their condemnation of rocket fire from Gaza, against civilian targets in southern Israel and attacks on Israeli civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The impasse in the political process exacerbates the desperation of the Palestinian people and provides a fertile ground for extremists on both sides. The recent surge of violence also threatens to undermine the achievements made so far in Palestinian institution- and State-building.

5. The Organizers shared the assessment made by participants that the current dramatic developments in the wider region of the Middle East and North Africa added to the need to redouble efforts to break the deadlock between Israelis and Palestinians. In this connection, they felt strongly that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be anchored in the principles of international law, as force and unilateral steps would not bring peace.

6. The Organizers were encouraged by the consensual view among participants that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was imperative for the attainment of peace and stability in the entire region of the Middle East. They expressed serious concern about the prolonged stagnation and impasse of the peace efforts between the Israelis and Palestinians. The Organizers reiterated their full support for the speedy revival of the Middle East peace process, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet's Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The Organizers also appreciated that the participants had stated their firm support for ending Israeli occupation in order to achieve a permanent two-State solution, in which Israel and Palestine would live side by side in peace and security within mutually recognized borders. The Organizers joined the participants in urging the parties to resume, without delay, serious negotiations that would lead, within an agreed timeframe, to the resolution of the permanent status issues: borders, Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, water and security. They also urged the release of all Palestinian political prisoners currently held in Israeli prisons and detention facilities.

7. The Organizers reiterated the global consensus on the illegality of settlements and shared the serious concern expressed by participants about Israel's resumption of these illegal policies and practices, thus rendering the continuation of permanent status negotiations meaningless. They were alarmed by Israel's ongoing policy in East Jerusalem, which aimed at altering the legal status of the City and its physical, demographic and cultural character. They condemned the illegal expansion and consolidation of Israeli settlements in and around East Jerusalem, as well as the illegal and provocative measures against Palestinian residents, including house demolitions, evictions, land confiscation and residency rights revocations. The Organizers noted that the vast majority of United Nations Member States, including this Committee, considered that all settlements were illegal, including the so-called "natural growth", and had to be halted immediately. The Organizers also stressed that the construction of settlements and the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constituted a clear violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions. Alarm was expressed at the rising number of acts of violence and brutality committed by Israeli settlers against

Palestinian civilians, the widespread destruction of public and private Palestinian property and infrastructure, and the internal displacement of civilians. A complete and immediate cessation of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, was imperative and would positively contribute to creating a political climate conducive to advancing the negotiations. The Organizers support the firm stance by the international community not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to occupied East Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.

8. It was acknowledged that Jerusalem, sacred for Christians, Jews and Muslims worldwide, represented the common heritage of all humanity, and, therefore, Israeli actions with regard to the City's holy places were totally unacceptable. The Organizers fully agreed with the participants that a negotiated agreement on the status of Jerusalem should take into full account the political and religious concerns of all inhabitants of the Holy City. Such an agreement should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of the City's inhabitants, as well as the permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by peoples of all religions and nationalities. The Organizers also reiterated that any agreement that did not include East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian State would not lead to sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace.

9. Speakers in the Meeting deplored the lack of any appreciable improvement in the humanitarian, economic and social situation in the Gaza Strip. Due to the continued blockage by Israel of materials vitally needed for reconstruction efforts, three quarters of the damage inflicted on buildings and infrastructure during the Israeli military offensive on Gaza remained in a state of disrepair. Water and sanitation infrastructure was nearing collapse. The continued suffocation of Gaza's economy due to the blockade provided a fertile ground for extremists and militants leading to the recent escalation of rocket and mortar fire from the Strip. Speakers called for the immediate lifting by the Israeli Government of the blockade against the Gaza Strip, as well as for halting all rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza at Israeli targets.

10. A number of participants had drawn attention to the plight of Palestine refugees, whose status and suffering had been passed down from generation to generation over the past six decades. The inherent vulnerability of the refugees and the dire conditions of their exile called for a just and lasting solution based on the principles of international law and the lessons drawn from successful examples of conflict resolution in other parts of the world. The Organizers supported the view that justice for Palestine refugees and the Palestinian people as a whole also encompassed fair recompense and recourse for the wrongs inflicted upon them under occupation.

11. The Organizers supported the participants' argument that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in particular the question of Palestine, which is at its core, was an urgent international imperative and that all States and regions had an interest in securing a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. **Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the other members of the world community, had a crucial role to play in enlarging the international constituency in support of Middle East peace and bringing additional actors into the peacemaking process. In that regard, the Organizers joined the participants in welcoming the recent wave of formal recognition of the State of Palestine by Latin American and Caribbean countries in its 1967 borders.** These important steps constituted a powerful resolve by the countries of this region to engage more directly in Middle East

peacemaking and widen the number of international stakeholders in support of a two-State solution.

12. **The Organizers took note of the signing on 29 March 2011 of a protocol establishing diplomatic relations between Uruguay and the State of Palestine.** They were gratified that the signing of this important bilateral document coincided with the holding of the United Nations Meeting in Montevideo devoted to realizing Palestinian statehood and achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace.

13. **It was noted that 112 countries had already recognized Palestine as a State,** with the majority extending their recognition following the November 1988 Declaration of Statehood by the Palestinian National Council. The Organizers expressed full support for the Palestine's diplomatic initiative and considered that the entire international community should be ready to recognize the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, including through a Security Council resolution at an appropriate time during the 65th session of the General Assembly in 2011. The Organizers called upon those countries of the region and beyond that have not done so to seriously consider recognizing the State of Palestine in the 1967 borders and to play a constructive role in promoting peace in the Middle East. They should also actively support the institution- and State-building programme of the Palestinian Authority to prepare the institutional, economic and infrastructural framework of the future Palestinian State. This would require significant international political, technical and financial support. Latin American and Caribbean countries, their public and civil society institutions could join other global actors in helping lay the foundation of a future sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State. The Organizers extend this call to the entire international donor community, urging it to continue to provide generous support for the Palestinian efforts at rehabilitation, reconstruction, economic development and State-building.

14. The Organizers reiterated that there was no alternative to **the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, based on international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009) and all other relevant United Nations resolutions.** Participants underlined that a crucial and indispensable condition for achieving a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. They also urged the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to strive and work for national reconciliation as an essential condition for achieving a lasting solution of the question of Palestine and the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State. They commend President Mahmoud Abbas for his principled leadership in all efforts to bring about a peaceful solution of the question of Palestine in accordance with international legitimacy.

15. The Organizers would like to join participants in commending the work of civil society organizations aimed at supporting Israelis and Palestinians in their quest for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict. They acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the dedicated work of Latin American and Caribbean organizations in support of the Palestinian people, by implementing specific projects in the West Bank or aiming to overcome the Gaza blockade to bring humanitarian aid to those in desperate need. The Meeting was apprised of the initiative of The Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress in Costa Rica and the Global

Foundation for Democracy and Development in the Dominican Republic for promoting concrete action by stakeholders in the Latin American and Caribbean region in support of Middle East peace and encouraged these and other organization to continue their important work.

16. The Organizers wish to acknowledge that numerous speakers in their presentations commended the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for organizing international events, such as this one in Montevideo, contributing to raising international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilizing Governments and public opinion worldwide in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

17. The Organizers, on behalf of the participants, expressed their appreciation for the important initiative of the Government of Uruguay, to invite the Committee to convene this Meeting in its capital, which constitutes a concrete step in the search for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in championing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They noted that the contribution of Uruguay and other players in the region and beyond was crucial to achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians and for bringing stability to the Middle East. They also expressed their deep appreciation to the Government of Uruguay and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs for hosting the Meeting, for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation, and for the generous hospitality extended to them.

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