

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

29 November 2002

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,

I am honoured to take part in this solemn meeting in my capacity as President of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. Recognizing the need to promote and encourage efforts in support of the Palestinian people, the General Assembly, in its resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Over the years, this event has offered the world community an opportunity to renew its commitment to supporting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination and statehood on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law, as well as the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The question of Palestine remains the oldest unresolved issue on our Organization's agenda. It was on this day in 1947 that the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), partitioning Palestine into two States, one Arab and one Jewish, with an economic union between them. Jerusalem was to be placed under a special international regime. This plan has never been implemented in its entirety, but it is encouraging to note that a two-State arrangement has now become a broadly accepted basis for any viable solution to the question of Palestine, as affirmed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

In the course of 1990s, despite heightened expectations at the time, the Oslo and subsequent implementation agreements did not realize their promise of bringing peace and security to the region. It was the destructive combination of a failure to live up to those agreements and understandings, and the steady deterioration of the situation and provocative acts on the ground that led to the outbreak of the current intifada in late September 2000. Ever since, we have witnessed a continuing spiral of violence, which has resulted in much pain, suffering and destruction. Most tragically, many innocent civilians on both sides have lost their lives and thousands have been injured. Also, in just over two years, we have seen a complete breakdown in the political process.

The General Assembly has been much preoccupied with the developments on the ground. Frequent Israeli incursions into areas no longer under full Palestinian control, and internal and external closures of the Palestinian Territory mean that many Palestinians are now living under a

military, as well as a crushing economic siege. During the past twelve months, the Assembly has met three times in Emergency Special Sessions dealing with Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community has come out strongly against the extrajudicial assassinations of suspected Palestinian militants which are known to have led to large scale civilian casualties, against arbitrary detentions, use of disproportionate force, house demolitions and continuing settlement activity as well as against terrorist acts of Palestinian extremists which resulted in the deaths of Israeli civilians. The anguish, frustration and anger of the Palestinians is understandable but tactics of terror and suicide bombing are counterproductive. For example the recent terrorist attack against Israeli civilians in a hotel in Mombasa in which also a number of Kenyan civilians died will be justifiably condemned the world over but the Palestinian cause will not be advanced a single inch forward, just the contrary. The unending spiral of violence will not bring about peace, security or prosperity. The Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy Ms. Catherine Bertini, following her visit to the region in August of 2002, underlined the serious and mounting nature of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the West Bank and Gaza. The plight of the Palestinians, who are now enduring unemployment around 50 per cent and poverty levels nearing 60 per cent, is of great concern to all of us.

As it has done for many years, in spite of the serious funding shortfalls, UNRWA continues to play a vital role in providing essential relief services. The Agency should be assisted in all possible ways by the donor community in order to keep up with the rising needs of Palestine refugees.

It has been unequivocally acknowledged today that there is no alternative to the prompt resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian political negotiations based on international legality and readiness to take full account of each other's needs and interests. Overcoming mistrust and suspicion, refraining from provocative acts, ending the violence, and resuming the peace talks should be the imperatives at the present stage. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace can and must be established on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002), which embody the principles of "land for peace" and the two-State solution.

President Sadat in his famous speech delivered in Knesset made clear that "there is no peace that could be built on the occupation of the land of others" and that "in the absence of a just solution of the Palestinian problem, never will there be that durable and just peace upon which the entire world insists". The world still insists on the same thing but as I had the opportunity to see myself it is an ever increasing distrust on both sides and the violence rather than peace that fills the agendas of the day. It is clear that the Palestinians will never reconcile themselves to the unending occupation of their land and will continue to strive for their own national independence as their national aspirations are undoubtedly as strong as those of the Israelis. They both have the right to their own states as was made clear by the United Nations already 55 years ago. I am glad that the United Nations continues to insist on this right today.

However, for substantial headway to be made, the constructive involvement of third parties is essential. We fully support the sustained and close engagement of the Secretary-General Kofi

