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Statement by

**His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas
President of the State of Palestine
Chairman of the Executive Committee
of the Palestine Liberation Organization**

**on the occasion of
the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

29 November 2016

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Peter Thompson, President of the United Nations General Assembly

H.E. Mr. FodéSeck, President of the United Nations Security Council

H.E. Mr. Dian TriansyahDjani, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

H.E. Mr. Amrith Rohan Perera, Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to convey to you the greetings of the Palestinian people, who look forward to your efforts and support on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination and end the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine so that our people can live in freedom and dignity in their own country like all other peoples across the globe. Is this too much to ask?

You know dear friends that 2017 will mark the centennial of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967 and leading to the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, the catastrophe which befell the Palestinian people in 1948.

In 1988, the Palestinian National Council declared its abidance by the rule of international law and United Nations resolutions. The Palestine Liberation Organization(PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, has made a historical compromise and sacrifice by agreeing to establish the State of Palestine on the borders of the 4th of June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We reiterate our commitment to agreements concluded with Israel since 1993, but this commitment must be reciprocated from the Israeli side, and Israel must recognize the State of Palestine and work towards solving all final status issues and cease its settlement activities as well as put an end to its attacks and aggressions against our cities, villages and refugee camps and its policies of collective punishments and arrest and detention of thousands of Palestinian prisoners in its jails.

Israel is pursuing its occupation of East Jerusalem and its actions to alter the identity and character of the city. It is persisting in its attempts aimed at distorting reality in order to mislead and intimidate the international community through its attacks against the United Nations and its organs, including United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

which is dedicated to protecting and preserving the cultural heritage in Jerusalem and the rest of the world. Israel is trying to create confusion between what relates to religion and what relates to cultural and human heritage so as to advance its occupation and colonial expansion, as well as its attacks against Christian and Muslim holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, all this while the essence of this conflict is purely political not religious.

We reaffirm our respect for the Jewish religion. There is no animosity between us and the Jewish faith and its followers. Our animosity is towards the Israeli occupation of our land. We seek a just and lasting solution to the conflict based on the vision of two States on the 1967 borders, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security and enjoying good neighborly relations. We want a Jerusalem open for worship to the followers of the three monotheistic religions based on the historic status quo.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We stress that the illegal Israeli practices and policies of settlement construction and expansion on the land of the State of Palestine are entrenching a one-State reality of an apartheid nature, instead of consolidating the pillars of just and lasting peace, based on United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. This initiative stipulates the necessity to first end the Israeli occupation, because any regional cooperation that ignores the Palestinian cause and the need to end the Israeli occupation of our land will be doomed. Furthermore, bringing about a solution to this conflict will help remove pretexts used by extremists and terrorist groups thus contributing to spreading peace and security in the region for the sake of all its peoples.

From our side, we continue to extend our hand in peace, and call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities, including by adopting a Security Council resolution to end settlement activities, the main obstacle and the greatest threat to the achievement of peace. We also call on it to provide international protection to our people. We call for the early convening of the international peace conference and the setting up of an international mechanism and a timeframe for ending the Israeli occupation. We also call on the States which have not done so yet to recognize the State of Palestine as an expression of their support of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and as an investment in the two-State solution and peace. We hope that our efforts to achieve full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations will also receive your support.

Allow me to seize this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to all States that have recognized the State of Palestine and to all those who support the just Palestinian cause, including through their votes in the United Nations and other international fora on many important resolutions in relation to the question of Palestine. We also highly value their support for the efforts to achieve just peace in our region and the world.

We reaffirm today our gratitude to civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations and to all brothers and friends and to all freedom and peace loving peoples across

the world that has stood by the side of the Palestinian people. We appreciate their solidarity and support to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their legitimate national aspirations, including achieving their freedom and independence and a just and lasting peace.

Achieving historical reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis requires Israel's acknowledgment of its responsibility for the Nakba and its impact and consequences which remain in effect today, and requires an end to the Israeli occupation. This will open the door for the achievement of peace and will contribute to stability at the regional and international levels. Peace requires ending the historical injustice which befell our people since the Balfour Declaration and until today, and the United Kingdom must acknowledge the historical sin it committed by issuing this Declaration and recognize the State of Palestine. The Security Council must uphold its obligations and ensure that Israel complies with United Nations resolutions. Israel has a long record of non-compliance and violations of all United Nations resolutions, starting with United Nations General Assembly resolution 181, which has at its core the achievement of the two-State solution. Israel, instead, acquired by force Jerusalem and the territory dedicated to the State of Palestine according to this resolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are working faithfully for our State to be free and democratic, and to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability, the rule of law, protect and strengthen women rights, equality and non-discrimination based on ethnic and religious grounds and to spread a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue. We have demonstrated, especially throughout the last years, the commitment of the State of Palestine to international law and its contribution to strengthening its rule and its active role in the international instruments it has acceded to. We have also chosen, in the exercise of the Palestinian people's right to resist occupation, peaceful and legal means to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

We are determined to preserve the unity of our people and our land and we are actively working to lift the inhumane and unjust Israeli blockade against our people in the Gaza Strip and persisting in our efforts for reconstruction. We are also pursuing the establishment of a national unity government that will operate based on the PLO program, and the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The question of Palestine has remained a standing item and a priority on the United Nations agenda since its inception and this institution has adopted resolutions and recommendations that constitute a solid basis not to be circumvented in the pursuit of just and lasting peace. We reaffirm the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until a comprehensive solution is found, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

In this regard, we express our deep appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and those of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chair Mr. FodéSeck, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, and of the Bureau Members, and all Members and Observers of the Committee, as well as those of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, and the entire United Nations system, especially United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which requires your support so it can continue fulfilling the important mandate it was entrusted with on behalf of the Palestine refugees, and the many other agencies that provide support to the Palestinian people and the fulfillment of their rights.

The State of Palestine continues to act with the highest sense of responsibility in the service of the Palestinian people and to uphold its legal responsibilities and international obligations. The State of Palestine has always strived in good faith to achieve peace. The State of Palestine will pursue its accession to international agencies and conventions to safeguard and promote the rights of the Palestinian people and to enhance the pillars and universality of international law and will continue defending its people by all legal and peaceful means available.

In conclusion, let me thank you for your noble solidarity and your efforts and work to make of the year 2017 not only the year marking the 50th anniversary of the occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, but an international year to end the Israeli occupation, a year to intensify our concerted and collective efforts to ensure the Palestinian people can achieve freedom and independence and peace can prevail in our entire region.