



SRI LANKA

Statement

by

H.E. Major General Shavendra Silva

Ambassador & Chargé d' Affaires of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

During the Security Council Open Debate

on

**“The situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question”**

United Nations, New York.

24th April, 2013

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,

I join other speakers to commend you for convening this important debate. The Sri Lanka delegation associates itself with the statement made by Iran on behalf of the NAM.

The world must not forget the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially Gaza where conditions are unsustainable. We stress the urgency of leadership to end the marginalization and oppression of Palestinians in their own land. International humanitarian law obliges the protection of the civilian population in the Occupied Territories. It is regrettable that unethical practices continue, which would erode the likelihood for a two State solution.

The settlement activities run counter to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), and therefore is a factor in the recurrence of violence in the region. The international community has repeatedly called for a freeze on settlement activity. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council the Economic and Social Council, as well as the International Court of Justice, have all condemned the settlement activity as illegal. Ending these practices, which contribute to much human suffering and continuing friction in the occupied territories, are essential steps that need to be taken to improve the ground situation as well as for confidence building.

The blockade placed on Gaza, has resulted in approximately 80 per cent of families in that location being dependent on humanitarian aid from the UN for their survival. Restrictions on imports and exports are stifling economic growth. These restrictions need to be lifted within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860, as it would contribute significantly to the economic advancement of Gaza and wellbeing of the people. Sri Lanka also supports the work of United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory, including UNRWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which keep the majority of the people in Gaza supplied with their bare necessities.

Both parties to the conflict must create the necessary environment to facilitate peace. There is an urgent need for mutual confidence-building measures in support of efforts to resume dialogue and substantive negotiations. Israel must protect the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Territories and desist from actions that are contrary to the established rules of international law and practice. We are also mindful of the security needs of Israel. The indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians including the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel, will widen the gap between the parties. We

encourage both parties to exercise utmost restraint for the sake of the safety of civilians and for the greater goal of peace.

It is important to keep engaged in a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East. Sri Lanka supports the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolutions regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood and the attainment of a two State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders. The viability of the Two State solution will depend on the political unity and economic advancement of the Palestinian people, and we are confident that Palestinian internal reconciliation efforts will continue. The progress made by Palestinian Authority, despite severe political and economic constraints, is commendable.

Sri Lanka supports Palestine's application for admission to full membership in the United Nations, and it is our hope that the Security Council will give it their favourable consideration.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka welcomes the "*Caracas Declaration in Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the State of Palestine*" adopted at the recent special meeting of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Venezuela.

Thank You, Mr. President.
