



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN HANIFF
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AT THE QUARTERLY OPEN DEBATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**

NEW YORK, 15 JANUARY 2015

Mr. President,

I wish to thank you, Minister Heraldo Munoz, for Presiding and convening this open debate. Your presence here today clearly demonstrates the importance Chile attaches to the situation in the Middle East. I wish to also thank ASG Jens Toyberg-Frandzen for his comprehensive briefing.

2. My delegation associates itself with the statements to be delivered by Iran and Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation respectively.

Mr. President,

3. We just left behind the year 2014, which was declared by the UN as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. The international community had believed and hoped that 2014 would be a critical year for peace between Palestine and Israel; that it could further promote solidarity with the Palestinian people; and generate further momentum and international support for the realisation of their inalienable rights, which have been denied for too long.

4. Malaysia regrets the fact that the year 2014 ended with yet another disappointing and crushing blow for the Palestinian people and to their aspirations, as the window of opportunity once again slammed shut on their dream of self-determination. The US brokered peace talks had stalled, another war in Gaza broke out with catastrophic consequences, and the draft resolution aimed at setting a deadline to end Israeli occupation has failed to be adopted by the Security Council.

5. The year 2014 also signified the tenth anniversary of the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the construction of Israeli walls in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory. The Advisory Opinion which, unfortunately, for the past ten years, has been completely ignored and remains unimplemented.

Mr. President,

6. Malaysia wishes to reiterate and reaffirm its longstanding support for a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine based on the two-State solution and the legitimate rights of self-determination of the Palestinian people for an independent State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

7. We remain committed towards the implementation of internationally recognised initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative, the Oslo Accords, the Quartet Road Map, the Madrid Terms of Reference, and relevant Security Council resolutions. We commend the diplomatic initiatives by the United States in trying to revive the peace talks.

8. However, there has been little progress in resuming the peace talks, while the conditions on the ground are worsening and moving further and further away from a two-state solution due to among others, increasing illegal Israeli settlements and the continuing construction of the Wall in Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Mr. President,

9. Faced with past failures for over 60 years to resolve the conflict, the current deadlock in negotiations, and the increasingly unlikely future of a two-State solution, Malaysia ceases to see the wisdom in insisting that the only possible route to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is through bilateral negotiations. Such position only serves to perpetuate the status quo.

10. Let us not forget that the State of Israel was created by the UN following a General Assembly vote in 1947. The State of Israel did not come into being through bilateral negotiations with its neighbouring countries. And yet, we deny similar path to Palestine and criticise any attempt by Palestine to seek fulfilment of its right to self-determination at the UN as 'unilateral action'.

11. Due to the prolonged deadlock in resolving the conflict through bilateral negotiations, the UN Security Council must step in and shoulder its Charter responsibility to address the situation, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security beyond the confine of the region.

Mr. President,

12. As the Council is aware, Palestine had earlier this month acceded to various international conventions and treaties, covering issues such as the Cluster Munitions, the Law of the Sea, the International Criminal Court, and Transnational Organized Crime. Such move on the part of Palestine should not be seen as undermining or

jeopardising the peace talks. Instead, the international community should welcome the move as a step in the right direction.

13. In Malaysia's view, by acceding to such international conventions and treaties, Palestine's actions would be constrained by and benchmarked against internationally agreed norms and standards. It would also contribute towards deterring war crimes and ending impunity by the conflicting parties.

14. It is definitely the more preferable and legitimate path than turning to violence and extremism to achieve their legitimate right of self-determination. Thus, it would be in everyone's interest to embrace Palestine as a responsible member of the international community, bound by the rules and norms of international law.

Mr. President,

15. We commend the initiative and effort by France towards the end of 2014 in trying to bridge the gap between Council members on the issue of Palestine. The parameters for a peace agreement as proposed by France, and subsequently taken up by Palestine, provided a good basis for further negotiations.

16. These parameters for a peace agreement demonstrate that a Security Council resolution on Palestine, despite 'allergic reactions' by certain parties, is not necessarily incompatible with peace talks. Instead, the parameters and timeframe could provide the much needed pressure to both sides to return to the negotiating table to find a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

17. Malaysia wishes to see continued peace talks and negotiations between Palestine and Israel. We repeat our call for the international community, especially the Security Council, to shoulder its Charter responsibilities in resolving the conflict and to act as honest brokers to the conflicting parties to ensure long-term peace, security and stability in the region. However, negotiations should not take forever and should be carried out within a reasonable time frame.

Mr. President,

18. Moving on to Syria, Malaysia strongly supports all efforts towards finding a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis through dialogue and negotiations, especially by the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura. We will continue to support a comprehensive political settlement for the Syrian crisis based on the Geneva Communiqué. We note that there will be a meeting of the parties in the very near future and look forward to be apprised of developments by the SESG.

19. Malaysia welcomes the progress made by the UN and the OPCW in eliminating chemical weapons in Syria. However, we are gravely concerned by the use of chlorine for hostile purposes in Syria, as described in the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission reports.

20. We remain deeply concerned by the massive and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. We urge all parties in Syria to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and implement various Council decisions and resolutions on humanitarian access.

21. As Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Malaysia is concerned by the scale, scope and gravity of violations committed against children in Syria. We strongly condemn the widespread incidences of grave violations against children and call upon all parties to protect and uphold the rights of all children in Syria. We also urge the perpetrators of such heinous crimes against children in Syria to be held accountable.

22. With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, Malaysia reiterates our call for the complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as international law and the UN Charter. We also call on Israel to cease its violations of Lebanese sovereignty, and withdraw its troops from the occupied territories in Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1701(2006).

Mr. President,

23. The Middle East region has seen a deeply worrying surge in extremism and terrorism, including in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. It is no coincidence that extremism and terrorism were gaining ground against the backdrop of prolonged political conflict and highly unstable socio-economic situations in those countries.

24. Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms, the horrific atrocities committed by terrorist groups such as Da'ish, which in no way represent the peaceful religion of Islam. We must not let extremism and terrorism gain the upper hand in the region.

Mr. President,

25. For the past several years, Malaysia has called for an international platform for the silent majority, i.e. the voices of moderation, to come together and counter the increasing sentiment of extremism in all forms. This position is based on the belief that the real divide in the world today is not between East and West; between the developed and developing countries; or between Muslims and non-Muslims.

26. Instead, the fault line lies between moderates and extremists of all religions and beliefs, and in all areas and aspects. The disturbing developments in the world today and in the Middle East in particular, reflect the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to counter extremism and terrorism, including by addressing the underlying contributing factors, and not through the use of force alone.

27. The voices of moderation must prevail against the voices of those who espouse hate, ignorance, violence and extremism. We must summon the political will necessary

to bridge the differences and restore stability to the lives of all the peoples of the Middle East, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality.

Mr. President,

28. To conclude, Malaysia sincerely hopes to play a constructive role in the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, particularly in the Middle East. We look forward to contribute in the maintenance of international peace and security and in upholding the UN Charter, including through our long-held value of moderation, as a useful tool to counter extremism, reconcile differences and resolve disputes.

29. As Malaysia assumes its seat on the Security Council, I wish to reaffirm my delegation's readiness to cooperate and engage constructively with all interested partners and stakeholders on all issues before the Council, including the Palestine-Israel conflict.

I thank you, Mr. President.