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STATEMENT

BY

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AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

**72ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

**AT
THE SECURITY COUNCIL
ON**

**THE OPEN DEBATE IN CONNECTION WITH THE
AGENDA ITEM "THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE
EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN
QUESTION"**

**NEW YORK
18 OCTOBER 2017**

Mr. Chairperson,

1. I congratulate you on the assumption of your country to the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of October 2017 and thank you for organizing the debate on the important topic of the situation in the Middle East including the question of Palestine.
2. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his comprehensive and detailed briefing.
3. My delegation aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. President,

4. Since our last meeting in July, Israel has continued to expand its settlement activity at a faster rate than last year. Settlement activity during this reporting period was centered on East Jerusalem, where plans were made for over 2,300 housing units in July. Thus, according to resolution 2334 (2016), Israel has not “cease[d] all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and fully respect[ed] all of its legal obligations in this regard”. The settlements are illegal under international law and a

serious impediment to the peace process as well as any realization of the two-state solution.

5. The destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has also continued, albeit at a slower rate with 344 structures having been demolished since January 2017, displacing some 500 people. Another sad fact is that in August 3 educational facilities, attended by 175 children, were demolished or damaged. The Government of Israel has said that these were constructed illegally, despite the fact that building permissions for new Palestinian homes and infrastructure in the Occupied West Bank are almost impossible to obtain.

6. On 26 July, an amendment to the "Basic Law: Jerusalem the Capital of Israel" passed a first reading in the Knesset Law Committee. If this amendment were to be passed, it would further cement Israeli control over East Jerusalem.

Mr. Chairperson,

7. The issue of violence continues to be one of the main factors preventing the resolution of this conflict. As our Constitution clearly states Namibia "encourages the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means". We take note with sadness and concern, of the death on both sides, Palestinians

and Israelis, due to attacks. We take this opportunity, once again, to condemn terrorism in all its forms and call for dialogue between all parties.

Mr. Chairperson,

8. Despite the ongoing challenge, we are encouraged by the visit to Gaza of the Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah at the beginning of October, his first in two years. On 12 October, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority signed a reconciliation agreement that aims to mend the decade-long rift. It places Gaza and the West Bank under one government for the first time since 2007. These are all positive steps, which we hope indicate forward movement.

Mr. Chairperson,

9. As the conflict in Syria continues, we are encouraged by recent efforts to de-escalate the crisis following talks. However, much more work needs to be done and we hope that the 8th round of intra-Syrian talks convened by Steffan De Mistura in Geneva will provide further positive steps.

10. In Yemen, as the conflict continues, the lives of 20.7 million have been severely impacted. They require humanitarian or protection support, with 9.8 million people in acute need of assistance. An estimated 17 million people

are food insecure. Cholera is also rife in the country. This humanitarian crisis is man-made and must be brought to an end without delay.

Mr. Chairperson,

11. As these conflicts continue in the Middle East region, the Arab-Israeli conflict stretches back over many decades. Namibia firmly believes that ending the Arab-Israeli conflict will help curtail other violent conflicts in the region.

12. We call on the Israeli government to end all construction of settlements and the destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure. We once again call for Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and urge all parties to return to the tables of negotiation to ensure that the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable rights in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and as a rightful member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

I thank you.