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STATEMENT

BY

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DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AT

THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF
THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE
OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF
THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

CARACAS, VENEZUELA
17-18 APRIL 2013

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me on behalf of the people of Namibia, to express our sincere appreciation, to the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for hosting this important Special Meeting in Caracas. It is gratifying to note that the government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela kept its promise made by the departed Supreme Commander to hold this Special Meeting despite the difficulties experienced as a result of untimely passing on of the Supreme Commander of the Bolivarian Revolution, H.E. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. Once again, we express our sincere condolences to the people of Venezuela; he has done so much, to advance the noble cause of Palestinian independence.

Let me also extend Namibia's warm and revolutionary greetings to the government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for conducting a successful election last Sunday. We extend our sincere congratulations to H.E. Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros for having been duly elected as President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and wish him well in leading the government and people of Venezuela to greater heights of economic prosperity and social advancement.

Mr. Chairman,

The holding of this special meeting in Caracas, despite the circumstances I just mentioned, demonstrates a commendable commitment of the government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to a just and noble cause of the people of Palestine.

Let me also acknowledge and welcome the participation of H.E. Dr. Riyad al-Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine in our deliberations today. I am sure that his participation is an added advantage that will greatly help our discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

We are meeting here today in the land of Simón Bolívar "El Libertador", to deliberate on "implications of Resolution 67/19 passed by the UN General Assembly on 29 November 2012, granting a non-member observer status to the State of Palestine". I want to draw parallel scenarios to the question of Namibia, which like the case of Palestine, was at the centre of attention of the UN for many years.

Throughout the history of the liberation struggle, Palestinians and Namibians had often converged at the same crossroads. Both Palestine and Namibia were mandated territories after the First World War. The establishment of the Mandate System was intended to be a cornerstone of ending the second phase of the history of colonization, colonial rule, with a hope to bring it to its gradual decline. The League of Nations Covenant gave Great Britain mandatory power over Palestine. While Namibia, then known as South West Africa, was placed under South African mandate, among the "Class C" countries, or those considered furthest away from independence under the League of Nations Covenant. In fact both were given to Great Britain, but Namibia was handed over by Britain to its Dominion in South Africa.

However, despite good intention of the League of Nations, the sacred trust was betrayed in both cases of Namibia and Palestine, instead of leading to self-determination and independence, the sacred trust was turned into brutal instrument of suppression, loss of human dignity and robbery of the most precious assets; the land and its resources. As a result of forceful expulsion from their land, hundreds of thousands of them had been forced to join the armies of the world's refugees and many became freedom fighters, joining the ranks of the liberation movements.

The liberation movements for Namibia and Palestine namely SWAPO and PLO used similar diplomatic strategies; they both found international solidarity and diplomatic recognition, as well as political and moral support for their just cause. Similarly, the occupiers were acting in unanimity of

oppression. Israel and apartheid South Africa used similar tactics and strategies to fight the liberation movements and neighbouring States, committing naked acts of armed aggression, destabilization, military occupation and political assassinations. The two countries pursued nuclear weapons, while their patrons in the West looked the other way or buried their heads in the sand and pretended not to see what Israel and Apartheid South Africa were doing by introducing the weapons of mass destruction into the Middle East and Southern Africa.

Another element of similarity was lack of support from the Western countries to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in days of their struggle for their peoples' rights and legitimate aspirations. These liberation movements were categorized as terrorist organizations and their leaders such the late Yasser Arafat (PLO), Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela (ANC) and Sam Nujoma (SWAPO) were respectively called terrorists. What we saw during the liberation struggle in Southern Africa is exactly the same, we are witnessing today in Palestine. Therefore, we can only draw one conclusion, that political interests of the Western countries enjoy priority over the pursuit of justice and human rights.

When the League of Nations was dissolved on 18 April 1946, the mandated countries that had not yet become independent were transferred to the newly created Trusteeship Council of the UN. South Africa had sought to fully incorporate Namibia as a province of its territory, but the UN refused, and the General Assembly voted to transfer Namibia into the Trusteeship Council. However, South Africa refused and its refusal resulted into a lengthy legal battle at the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates,

Due to persistent refusal of South Africa to cooperate with the United Nations, the General Assembly filed the first of three requests for Advisory Opinions from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on various questions relating to the status of Namibia. In the 1950 Advisory Opinion, the ICJ concluded that South Africa had no legal obligation to conclude a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations, but also held that the Mandate was still in force, and that South Africa had no right to change the Territory's international status. The 1955 and 1956 Advisory Opinions dealt with the voting procedure of the General Assembly in considering reports and petitions on South West Africa and with its right to hear oral petitioners.

In 1962, Ethiopia and Liberia, the only African States which had been members of the League of Nations, brought action against South Africa at the ICJ, challenging failure on the part of South Africa to fulfil its international obligations in respect of South West Africa. While the case was in progress, a South African Government Commission published and began to implement the Odendaal Report, a plan to divide the territory of Namibia into 12 regions or "homelands", with over 60-70 per cent of the land remaining under the control of whites. This is similar to the Apartheid walls of annexation being built to perpetuate occupation and separate the people of Palestine from their land and means of livelihood as well as the constructions of illegal settlements in Palestine.

Mr. Chairman,

Apartheid was declared a crime against humanity by the UN General Assembly in resolution 2074 (XX) of 17 December 1965. However, Western countries blinded themselves from the reality of the situation and viewed apartheid from a different moral perspective, as opposed to the majority of the international community. Today international community stands united

in opposing the expansion of illegal settlements and confiscation of Palestinian land. Contrastingly, while some countries are opposed to settlements by words, they have done nothing to pressurize their main ally to stop its settlement activities, which are illegal in terms of international law.

Mr. Chairman

An event which triggered a chain of events with far reaching consequences was the opinion of ICJ delivered on 18 July 1966. On that day, the ICJ on the second phase of the cases with the President Sir Percy Spender (Australia) "casting vote" to break a tie, the previous votes being equally divided (seven-seven), found that the Applicant States (Ethiopia and Liberia) "could not be considered to have established any legal right or interest in the subject matter of their claims and accordingly decided to reject them".

On the same day, after the ICJ delivered its Judgment, SWAPO issued a statement that it was left with no other option than to declare "the ICJ's inexcusable refusal to act, would relieve Namibians once and for all, from any illusions, which they may have harboured about the United Nations as some kind of a saviour in their plights". SWAPO "had no other alternative, but to take up arms and bring about the liberation of Namibia". SWAPO decided then "that it was ready to cross many rivers of blood as days follow night" and was confident that victory will be achieved. The first military engagement between PLAN fighters and the apartheid South African troops took place on 26 August 1966 at Omugwombashe in northern Namibia.

Mr. Chairman,

Faced with the acts of brutality by occupying powers and the inability of the international community to fulfil its obligation of granting independence to colonial countries and people, as called for by UN General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, the liberation movements have

to come up with appropriate liberation strategies. In the case of Namibia, SWAPO pursued three strategies, namely: political mass mobilization of the Namibian population, intensification of international campaign to mobilize international opinion behind the just cause of the liberation struggle and as a last resort, the waging of the armed liberation struggle. The launching of the armed liberation struggle in Namibia brought new challenges and dynamics for the liberation movement in both the military and political fields. It also signalled the willingness of Namibians to face risks and bring about their own liberation. However, we must acknowledge that the circumstances were more favourable for waging an armed liberation during this period than in today's world.

In October 1966, by resolution 2145 (XXI), the General Assembly revoked the Mandate and declared Namibia to be the direct responsibility of the United Nations. Equally, in May 1967, during its fifth special session, the UN General Assembly, by resolution 2248 (S-V), established the United Nations Council for South West Africa (later changed to Council for Namibia), inter alia, "to administer South West Africa until independence, with the maximum possible participation of the people of the Territory" and in 1968, it adopted the name "Namibia" for the Territory. The Security Council endorsed the actions of the General Assembly by its resolutions 264 (1969) and 269 (1969) respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me also bring in the element of the US approach towards Southern Africa since the late 1960s. This will give us a better understanding of the current US approach to Israel-Palestine issues. Even though circumstances are entirely not the same, there are useful synopses to help us understand why they tend to approach issues, the way they do. Through National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39), President Nixon directed National Security Advisor Kissinger in April 1969 to establish U.S. policy toward Southern Africa. The NSSM 39 built on a new acceptance in the fundamental permanence and even desirability of enhancing the

Apartheid South African power in the region. As in the case of Palestine where the U.S. displays ambiguous approach by protecting Israel, in Southern Africa, the U.S. approach was mainly driven by the desire of mineral acquisition and the protection of apartheid regime in South Africa, while less consideration was given to human rights. We see similarity, while the United States continues to consider itself as a major peace partner in the Middle East; on the other hand, it continues to protect Israel blindly, even when Israel violates international humanitarian law.

Turning back to Namibia, in 1970, by resolution 276, the Security Council confirmed the illegality of South Africa's presence in the Territory. The same year, the Security Council decided to request an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice as to the legal consequences for States of South Africa's continued presence in Namibia notwithstanding resolution 276 (1970). In 1971, in its Advisory Opinion, the ICJ confirmed the Assembly's revocation of the Mandate. It declared that South Africa must withdraw its administration and end its occupation and that Member States were under the obligation to refrain from any support or assistance to South African administration in Namibia. The ICJ opinion was a psychological defeat for the Apartheid South Africa. From December 1971 to March 1972, a major strike took place that involved up to 13,000 contract workers, the backbone of the Namibian labour force. The strike further exposed the brutality of occupation and strengthened international support and calls for South Africa to end its occupation. However, despite repeated calls from the UN and other international organizations for its unconditional withdrawal from Namibia, South Africa persisted with its illegal occupation.

In 1976 the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly through resolution 31/146 as "the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people". Both SWAPO and PLO were granted observer status and recognized as sole and authentic representatives of their peoples respectively.

On 30 January 1976, the Security Council adopted resolution 385, in which it declared that it was imperative to hold free elections under United Nations supervision and control for the whole of Namibia as one political entity. South Africa did not initially accept this plan.

Instead, South Africa came up with its own internal settlement plan, supposedly to prepare the inhabitants of Namibia towards independence in accordance with the terms and conditions set by Apartheid regime in South Africa. The Apartheid regime brought tribal leaders with little or no legitimacy to Windhoek to purportedly discuss the future plan for the country and write an independence constitution. South Africa wanted to create fictitious facts on the ground. In fact the Apartheid regime wanted to control the transitional process, to bring into office of an independent Namibia, a government that would support, not challenge, South African interests. It created an anti-SWAPO platform put together during the Turnhalle internal constitutional talks that could emerge as an alternative to SWAPO. The larger group of the tribally handpicked representatives came to be known as Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). Unfortunately for the apartheid South Africa, credibility and legitimacy of the groups it created were two of the main problems.

The international pressure also started piling up on the Western countries that were seen or perceived to be protecting the Apartheid South Africa, just as they continue to protect Israel today. An attempt was made to expel South Africa from the UN and impose mandatory sanctions against Apartheid regime, but Western countries: United States, United Kingdom and France used triple veto to protect the apartheid regime, reasoning that their joint action was aimed at preserving the universality of the United Nations

Due to South African refusal and mounting international pressure, the five Western members of the Security Council; Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States - then began to seek a way of implementing resolution 385. This group, which

became known as the "Contact Group", worked principally with South Africa, SWAPO and the front-line States (then comprising Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) (Nigeria also participated) and maintained close contact with the Secretary-General and Mr. Ahtisaari, the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia at that time (later Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Namibia). A round of "proximity talks", held in New York in February 1978, produced the "Proposal for a settlement of the Namibian situation" which, on 10 April 1978, was presented by the Contact Group to the President of the Security Council and resulted into Security Council 435.

Despite the fact that UN Security Council 435 was supported by the Contact group, it remained unimplemented for almost 12 years. The Reagan Administration which came to power in 1981 introduced a linkage of Cuban troops to the implementation of United Nations Plan for Namibia called for by UN Security Council 435. It crafted a policy then known as "Constructive Engagement" with Apartheid South Africa and "Constructive Disengagement" meant for Cuban departure from Angola. This was a deviation from the original plan meant to create other fictitious facts on the ground. The US calculated that the departure of Cuban troops from Angola would leave the Angolan government vulnerable to the combine military attacks by the Apartheid South Africa and Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The U.S. strategy was designed to bring UNITA to power in Angola and at the same time delay the Namibian independence in order to weaken SWAPO significantly in favour of Apartheid tribally created parties.

Mr. Chairman,

Another element was the way the western countries wanted to influence the fundamental principles of the future constitution of an independent Namibia. In 1982, the western countries realized that they were reading from the wrong page of history, they initiated negotiations on constitutional principles. The "1982 Constitutional Principles" were

contained in the UN Security Council document S/15287, negotiated between the Western Five Contact Group parties to the Namibian conflicts.

Throughout the process of negotiations, the western countries always sided with South Africa at the expense of the liberation movement SWAPO. This is similar to what is going on in Palestine. Israeli provocations and violations are conveniently ignored. Namibia finally achieved independence on 21 March 1990 with the United Nations Secretary-General accorded a rare honour to administer the oath of office to H.E. Dr Sam Nujoma, the First President of Namibia.

While negotiation played a role towards the attainment of Namibia's independence, the game changer was the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale at which the Cuban internationalists together with the Freedom Fighters of SWAPO and Angolan armed forces defeated the Apartheid South African forces. The defeat of Apartheid forces did not only pave away for Namibia's independence, but also to the collapse of Apartheid regime in South Africa itself.

Today Apartheid is consigned to the darkest place in the graveyard of history. On its tombstone, the names of those who aided and supported Apartheid are clearly inscribed. Similarly, when the Israeli brutal occupation is finally relegated to the darkest place on the graveyard of history, the names of those supporting and helping its illegal activities are also going to be inscribed on its tombstone.

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates,

That was the long and arduous road Namibia had travelled before it attained independence. There were many obstacles purposely thrown on the way to delay the independence, but due to the unwavering support of the international community, particularly from fellow Africans, Latin America and Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Namibia was able to endure different types of machinations and countless maneuvers. The international

Community was a pillar of strength during the difficult years of our struggle for independence and self-determination. Yesterday, we were beneficiary of international goodwill, but today we have joined the community of nations as providers of international goodwill. We hope Palestine will soon attain independence and join the family of sovereign nations.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude with a question, which is a theme for this roundtable discussion. What then are implications from the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19? There are implications on the part of Palestinians, the international Community, Israel and its supporters. As Committee members, we must mobilize our populations, particularly the youth and exert pressure on Israel to end its illegal occupation of Palestine. We must also put pressure on Security Council members, particularly those who persistently continue to protect Israel's illegal activities to stop supporting inhuman policies and without further delay, recommend the admission of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

Namibia on its part promises to continue its unwavering commitment to the just cause of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and independence and strongly support the heroic people of Palestine in their quest for freedom and independence from the brutal and illegal occupation until the attainment of final victory.

I thank you!