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**STATEMENT
BY
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AT

**THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE
ON
"THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST;
INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE"**

**NEW YORK
23 JANUARY 2013**

Mr President,

I have the distinct honour to participate today, in the open debate on "The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Question of Palestine". I would like to express our appreciation to Pakistan for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. Similarly, I would like also to express our appreciation to Mr. Robert Serry, Special Coordinator of the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary General for his insightful and comprehensive briefing on the prevailing situation in the Middle East.

My delegation aligns itself with a statement delivered by Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, but would like to make additional comments reflecting our national position. Due to time constraints, I will limit the comments to the situation in Palestine.

Mr. President,

There is no shred of doubt that the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied territory of Palestine continues to face numerous challenges and test of time. This is due to a combination of many factors such as the absence of political will to pursue the peace process and

continuous acts of provocation by the occupying power. Namibia believes that for a process of negotiation to succeed, it requires an impartial peace broker and committed and willing partners to carry it through to its logical conclusion. Currently these factors appear to be entirely absent and the vacuum of absence is filled by negative activities.

Last year on 29 November, the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to accord Palestine a non-member observer state status in the United Nations. My delegation has supported and voted for resolution 67/19, because we did not see it as an obstacle to the peace process, but because we thought it will enhance the process and send a clear message that the international patience was gradually becoming thin. This important gesture by the international community was greeted with peaceful celebrations in the occupied territories and with punishment on the people of Palestine by Israel, the occupying power.

My delegation noted with concern that following that important vote, Israel in total disregard to international opinion, announced its intentions to proceed with plans for settlement construction of more than 7,000 housing units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and, most

alarming, indicated that planning would proceed on several thousand housing units in the E-1 area of the West Bank between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The constructions of illegal settlements and the Apartheid Walls of annexation will not enhance Israel's security, they mutilate the State of Palestine, thus contributing to a hostile environment that will make the prospect of two two-state solution impossible to achieve. These activities are also contrary to ICJ Advisory Opinion of July 2004 and constitute grave breaches under the 4th Geneva Convention.

Equally, we deplore the action of the Israeli government in withholding Palestinian tax revenue, as a punishment for Palestine's admission to UN General Assembly as non-member observer state. The upgrading of Palestine's status by to UN General Assembly is a matter of legitimate aspiration for the people of Palestine and decision of member states in the exercise of their sovereign rights and free will.

Mr. President,

Namibia shares the conviction that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is imperative for the attainment of peace and stability in the

Middle East. There is no substitute for negotiations to that end, but the process of negotiation cannot become open-ended. While we express our support for the resumption of peace process; we caution that it should not be turned into a perpetual orbit with no destination. The overwhelming vote by the UN General Assembly last year underscores the urgent need to resume meaningful talks.

Genuine peace can only come about when parties to the conflict take bold steps to heal the bleeding wounds and usher in a new era of hope and optimism. We have therefore, come here today, to express our support for the revival of the Middle East peace process, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Quartet's Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Equally my delegation reaffirms the legitimate right and aspiration of the People of Palestine to their own independent State. I take this opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering solidarity and support, for the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination and the independence of their State of Palestine, which we hope should take its rightful place among the family of sovereign nations.

Mr. President,

My delegation wants to make one thing clear, that our position is not biased against Israel, but merely opposed to its actions. We have repeatedly, acknowledged that Israel, like any other country on earth, is duly entitled to adequate security. This ought to be recognized and acknowledged. However, the pursuit of security should not be a blatant excuse, to violate the human rights of the people of Palestine. It is our firmly held conviction that the only way that Israel can guarantee its security is through the creation of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State, which would exist side by side with Israel, inside internationally recognized borders. It is only then that a leopard will be able to lie with a lamb and a calf will graze together with a lion cub.

I thank you, Mr. President!