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**The OIC Group Statement at the Special Event on the Occasion of
the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

New York, 29 November 2012

Mr. Chairman,

Today, once again, we are gathered here to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People which is yet another affirmation of the international community's continued support to the Palestinian cause, and solidarity with the Palestinian people. On behalf of the OIC Group, I am pleased to express gratitude to the United Nations and all its organs. Particularly, I would like to thank the Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki moon, and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Abdoussalam Diallo for their relentless efforts and initiatives in support of the Palestinian cause.

The OIC Group believes that the international community has a special responsibility to assist the Palestinian people realize their national rights to self-determination, sovereignty, and independent state in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as finding a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees in line with United Nations Resolution 194. In this regard, this afternoon, the international community will have a historic opportunity, as well as responsibility, to reaffirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people, and support the just cause of the Palestinians for independence. The Palestinians have been intensely negotiating with Israel in good faith over the last two decades to regain their territories, their inalienable rights, and to live in peace and security. None of these legitimate goals unfortunately is so far achieved, and none appears within the grasp of the Palestinians in the short term, given Israel's permanent strategy of shifting the goal posts.

It is unfortunate that on this very day of the Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the prospects for peace and justice in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are challenged by the occupying Power, Israel's colonial and discriminatory policies and illegal practices. Israel is continuing to illegally build settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It is constructing the apartheid wall, restricting Palestinians' access to worship places, escalating acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, denying free movement of people and goods, and ever more confiscating Palestinian homes and lands. Israel's such daily violations of international law have become daily practices, which are systematically undermining the prospects for a two-State solution.

The OIC Group expresses grave concern at the situation in Occupied East Jerusalem, where the Israeli settlement campaign is most intense, and calls for a complete end to all settlement activities, excavations, including near Al-Haram Al-Sharif, home demolitions, residency revocations, and closure of Palestinian institutions in the City. The Group condemns the terror, violence and provocations by extremist Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and properties, including homes, agricultural lands, and Muslim and Christian holy sites, and cautions that such actions are fueling religious sensitivities that risk further destabilization and must be brought to an immediate end by the Occupying Power.

Moreover, Israel's escalating military aggression and the illegal blockade it imposes on the Gaza Strip are not only a collective punishment against 1.5 million Palestinians in the Strip, they also represent the continuation of a war crime against humanity, which must stop. In this vein, the OIC Group, once again, calls on the international community, and the UN Security Council in particular, to assume its responsibility to take the measures necessary for an immediate and permanent cessation of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. It is long overdue to end the Palestinian people's suffering, and to provide them with protection, and the necessary means to facilitate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Chairman,

Palestine's accession to full membership of the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) last year is an international recognition of the Palestinian' rights. This achievement illustrates

and International Monetary Fund about the implementation of the Palestinian National Authority's 2009 plan for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a two-year period is yet another strong indication of Palestine's readiness for an independent Statehood.

In conclusion, we believe that a permanent peace between Israel and Palestine is a sine-qua-non for both peoples to focus their energies and resources on developing their societies in peace, harmony and co-existence. The OIC Group expresses strong solidarity with the Palestinian people, and once again urges all the UN Member States to enable Palestine to become a Non-member Observer State by voting this afternoon in favor of the draft resolution, regarding the "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". Granting Palestine an improved diplomatic status, --- however a symbolic milestone in Palestinian ambitions for statehood, will bring Israelis and Palestinians a step closer to achieving a sustainable solution on the basis of two-State, living side by side in peace and security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman