

United States Statement

November 15, 2006

Thank you, Mr. President.

On November 8, Israeli artillery shells were fired into a residential area of Beit Hanoun, killing 17 civilians. The injuries and loss of life, and especially the deaths of a number of young children, were tragic. That day, President Bush conveyed deepest condolences on behalf of the United States. The President called on all parties to act with care so as to avoid any harm to innocent civilians. We have seen the Israeli government's apology and understand an investigation has begun. We hope it will be completed quickly and that appropriate steps will be taken to avoid a repetition of this tragic incident.

We now find ourselves for the third time in the short life of the Human Rights Council meeting in a special session, the second one focused on addressing the military actions in the West Bank and Gaza. This Council should not address particular military actions taken during a period of armed conflict that are clearly governed by the law of war. It is indeed unfortunate that the Council is using its limited resources to discuss subjects not squarely within its mandate when there are pressing concerns that fall explicitly within its purview. **Why is the Council loathe to address important human rights situations elsewhere?**

With respect to the text of the resolution under consideration, rather than attempting honestly to shed light on all the facts contributing to the violence in Gaza, the resolution before us is a blatant effort to exploit the tragic incident in Beit Hanoun to advance an unbalanced and view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the wake of the Beit Hanoun attacks, Hamas' leadership declared that the truce with Israel was over and armed struggle could resume; and Hamas' military wing called on Muslims worldwide to strike American targets and interests. We strongly reject such calls. More terror, whether directed at Israel or the United States, is not the solution nor will it enable the Palestinian people to achieve their aspirations. It is the responsibility of the Hamas-led PA government to prevent terror and take the necessary steps to stop attacks and dismantle terrorist infrastructure. Progress towards peace needs a Palestinian government that disavows terror and violence and accepts the principles outlined by the Quartet.

## Check Against Delivery

As Secretary Rice has noted, "It is extremely important that every party act responsibly so that the possibility of peace will be preserved." The resolution being considered by the Council today includes an unsubstantiated determination that Israel violated international law through military incursions, a determination that this body does not have the mandate or information to make. It also misrepresents events on the ground to provide a one-sided picture of the complex and difficult reality of the situation in Gaza.

The United States remains committed to the Road-map, an agreement reached by the parties and endorsed by the international community for achieving a real and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis. We seek to realize the vision of two states: Israel and Palestine, living side by side, in peace and security. Just as both sides must have the political will and determination to reach that goal, the international community, including the Human Rights Council, must do better to advance that aim.

Thank you, Mr. President.