**Mr. Al-Kidwa**

1. **Unlike the Israeli Prime Minister, who a few days ago told the Assembly that he had come to the United Nations from Jerusalem, I — a native son of the land — was not able to come here from Jerusalem, because East Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, still remains under Israeli occupation, despite the numerous United Nations resolutions in that regard.**
2. **The abnormal situation of the city, which is sacred to the three monotheistic religions, is a clear indicator that we in the Middle East are, regrettably, still far from peace.**
3. **Only when East Jerusalem is returned to its people, when United Nations resolutions are completely complied with and implemented and when the leaders of both countries are able to come freely from Jerusalem, will we have truly achieved the peace that we have so long awaited.**
4. **We are now at an important juncture that could constitute the beginning of the road to peace.**
5. **Israel, the occupying Power, has completed its disengagement from the Gaza Strip with its withdrawal of the settlers, its dismantlement of the settlements there and the departure of the Israeli forces from that territory.**
6. **In the northern West Bank, some settlers were also withdrawn, and four settlements were dismantled.**
7. **The end of the colonial settlement of one part of our land — regardless of how small it may be — is an important development, as is the withdrawal of the occupying forces from within that part.**
8. **It is an important development that resulted from the steadfastness of our people and the growing realization, locally and internationally, of the impossibility of the continuation of the status quo.**
9. **We recognize that the disengagement required political boldness.**
10. **But, more important than the disengagement itself, are the way in which it occurred and the context, as well as the steps that will follow.**
11. **That will determine whether the disengagement will take us further towards a comprehensive settlement and peace, or whether it is actually a step imposed by the realities on the ground and intended to facilitate the continuation of the occupation, the colonization of the West Bank and the obstruction of a final settlement.**
12. **For our part, we dealt positively with those matters and exerted strenuous efforts to prepare ourselves for assuming our responsibilities, to coordinate the steps to be taken with the Israeli side and to ensure a peaceful and safe atmosphere during the implementation phase.**
13. **Indeed, we achieved reasonable results in that respect.**
14. **Despite that fact, however, the basic nature of the plan remains:**
15. **it was unilateral and did not take into consideration Palestinian interests and positions.**
16. **Israel, the occupying Power, has left the Gaza Strip completely devastated.**
17. **Over the years, Israel destroyed Gaza’s infrastructure, economic capabilities and social fabric, as well as the Palestinian Authority’s security apparatus.**
18. **Even the areas that had been under the control of its settlements were almost totally destroyed by Israel when it withdrew and left behind piles of rubble, which in itself constitutes a serious problem economically, environmentally and psychologically.**
19. **Another problem was that Israel left behind, and did not dismantle, what it called houses of worship — which were not supposed to be there to begin with — in total disregard of its legal obligation to return the land to its original condition prior to the occupation.**
20. **Furthermore, since the disengagement, the Gaza Strip has remained under the control of Israel, which effectively continues to control the airspace, the territorial waters and the borders, thus continuing its control of the movement of persons and goods into and out of Gaza.**
21. **For that reason, and in the light of the principle of the unity and territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory, the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip has not ended and the legal status of Gaza has not changed:**
22. **it remains part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.**
23. **Overall, Israel’s occupation and colonization of the Gaza Strip constitutes one of the worst injustices in recent history.**
24. **In addition, it must be clear that the Gaza Strip — which comprises only 6 per cent of the area of the occupied Palestinian territory and which is the most densely populated area in the world — cannot attain economic or political sustainability in isolation from the West Bank: without a permanent link to the West Bank, without freedom of movement and without tangible political progress and similar steps taken there.**
25. **What Israel is doing in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem, is cause for us to be even more pessimistic.**
26. **Israel has continued its construction of the wall in disregard of the unprecedented 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and resolution of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in that regard.**
27. **As everyone can see, Israel has persisted in committing this grave crime, continuing to seize Palestinian land and attempting to annex it de facto, thereby destroying the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians, isolating them and imposing on them a totally different way of life and an unacceptable political situation.**
28. **Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to establish and expand settlements.**
29. **It has even devised the so-called E-1 plan to seize the whole of East Jerusalem and connect it to the Maale Adumim settlement, thereby severing the West Bank into two separate parts.**
30. **All of the foregoing not only is unlawful and inhuman, but will also destroy any hope for a settlement and peace based on the two-State solution.**
31. **The central mission for the international community now, if we wish to safeguard the future of the Middle East and maintain the prospects for peace, is to bring about a real and complete cessation of all settlement activities and of the construction of the wall and to enforce the rule of law, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and relevant United Nations resolutions.**
32. **That must be our central mission, and whether there is political progress or not, we must accomplish it.**
33. **But then, how are we to deal with the situation and move forward?**
34. **First, we need to find rapid solutions for the outstanding issues regarding the Gaza Strip, including the Rafah crossing, the airport, the seaport, the removal of rubble from the Gaza Strip, and linking Gaza to the West Bank.**
35. **If we resolve those issues we may be able to change the living conditions of the Palestinians there.**
36. **Secondly, the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings should be implemented, particularly the Israeli withdrawal from cities to pre-September 2000 positions and the release of prisoners and detainees.**
37. **This could bring about a new reality and begin the process of rebuilding confidence between the two sides.**
38. **Thirdly, and in parallel with the aforementioned, it is necessary to return to negotiations and begin urgently the implementation of the road map, which lies at the heart of making political progress and is the path to a resolution of the conflict.**
39. **For our part, we are ready to do this, and to begin final status negotiations immediately, as called for by President Abbas in his speech a few days ago.**
40. **We hope that the Quartet will use its influence to make that happen, and we also hope that the international community as a whole, represented by the United Nations, will provide the needed support in that regard.**
41. **Here we must stress the importance of the international assistance being extended to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority.**
42. **We would like to express our gratitude to all donor countries for their important and considerable contributions.**
43. **In that regard, I would like to express our appreciation as well for the role being played by Mr. Wolfensohn and his team, in particular for rapidly putting together an assistance programme for the Gaza Strip and for promoting economic development in the entire occupied Palestinian territory.**
44. **In that regard, the importance of the Group of Eight initiative must be emphasized,**
45. **and we express our hope that all donor countries will support it.**
46. **We look forward to enjoying a dignified life like all other peoples of the world;**
47. **we look forward to exercising our right to self-determination and national independence;**
48. **we look forward to building our institutions and to enjoying a democratic way of life and democratic governance;**
49. **we look forward to a peace based on two States, Palestine and Israel, in conformity with the 1949 Armistice Line;**
50. **and we look forward to a just, agreed solution for the Palestine refugees in accordance with resolution 194.**
51. We have worked seriously to put an end to the cycle of military attacks and counter-attacks.
52. We undertook a national dialogue that led to a unilateral declaration of ceasefire,
53. and that ceasefire has been respected despite Israel’s obstructions and provocations.
54. That effort has led to an improvement in the general atmosphere;
55. it is incumbent upon both parties to strengthen it.
56. For our part, we will continue our national dialogue with a view to establishing a permanent and mutual ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, while reaffirming the right in principle of the Palestinian people to resist occupation and to self-defence.
57. We must also reach a commitment by all Palestinian groups for a complete cessation of the targeting of civilians in Israel, which we have repeatedly condemned and which we view as harmful to our national interest.
58. Moreover, we will continue to exert efforts to impose law and order and to enhance our political system on the basis of real democracy, encompassing political pluralism and elections at all levels, including municipal and legislative elections.
59. **Israel must stop its attempts to interfere in and sabotage those elections.**
60. We will also continue to advance the development of our national institutions in various fields and will continue to try to rebuild the Palestinian economy and to improve living conditions.
61. We must do that comprehensively throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including, of course, in the Gaza Strip, which has suffered the most extensive destruction.
62. **We shall exert our utmost efforts to achieve those goals, even though we realize that they are really the tasks of post-conflict reconstruction and that no other people has realized such goals while still under occupation.**
63. **Our achievements will inevitably be limited, since Israel, the occupying Power, still controls most aspects of everyday life in the territories.**
64. **Any progress in that regard will remain directly and organically linked to the achievement of real progress in the resolution of the conflict and the achievement of a comprehensive settlement between the two parties.**
65. **It seems that Israel and some of its friends now feel that they have succeeded in imposing many illegal conditions on the ground and in creating a degree of vagueness regarding some aspects of the conflict.**
66. **In that way, they feel that they have an opportunity to undermine the legal foundations of the question of Palestine, to undermine international legitimacy and to erode the neutrality of the United Nations.**
67. **We, in contrast, believe that situations created illegally will not stand.**
68. **We affirm that the facts are clear and indisputable, that justice and the rule of law will eventually prevail over force and that the United Nations — the embodiment of the international community — will not forsake its responsibilities and will not relent in the face of continuous violations of its resolutions.**
69. **We hope that the Israeli authorities will begin to seriously rethink their policies and positions instead of trying to market them in the United Nations and in other international forums.**
70. **We hope that they will declare their respect for United Nations resolutions and their readiness to implement them, rather than blaming the United Nations for adopting those resolutions.**
71. **That will be the start of the solution and the start of a final peaceful and permanent settlement, which must be based on law, international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.**

**Mr. Shalom**

1. It is my unique pleasure to praise His Excellency Ambassador Dan Gillerman, my emissary to the United Nations, who is in the Chair at present, upon his election to the post of Vice-President at this session of the General Assembly, and to wish him much success.
2. These are optimistic times in the Middle East.
3. The iron wall that has defined Israel’s relations with most of the Arab and Muslim world for generations, is coming down.
4. Israel’s contacts with Arab and Muslim States are growing at a rate never seen before.
5. Countries like Pakistan and others that in the past refused to acknowledge our shared humanity, today extend their hands in friendship and recognition.
6. Relations with key Muslim States, such as Turkey, are flourishing, while our peaceful ties with both Egypt and Jordan are constantly improving.
7. Here in New York this week, I have had the honour of meeting with more than 10 of my colleagues from the Arab and Muslim world — a number unthinkable just two years ago.
8. Those meetings have been friendly, as is only fitting for countries that are not in conflict — either territorially, or economically.
9. Israel welcomes this new readiness for contact,
10. and we encourage our neighbours to build on the foundations that we are now laying.
11. Contacts between Israel and its Arab and Muslim neighbours are good for the region, and good for peace.
12. We all share a common interest in building a region of tolerance and cooperation — a region where the moderates have the initiative, not the extremists, whose violence has set the agenda for so long.
13. **Indeed, those who genuinely wish to help the Palestinians and to bring them the benefits of peace and prosperity must realize that building contacts and cooperation with Israel is a crucial element in that process.**
14. Possibilities for cooperation abound.
15. In fields as diverse as agriculture, health, the environment, transportation and electricity, the potential benefits of Middle East regional cooperation are immense.
16. Such cooperation can bring tangible and immediate economic benefits, as Israel’s improving relations with Jordan and Egypt have shown.
17. Unfortunately, many of our ties with the Arab and Muslim world are still deep in the shadows, hidden from the public eye.
18. Today, I call on my Arab and Muslim colleagues to bring our contacts out into the light of day, so that our peoples may understand our shared desire to work with each other to bring peace and prosperity to our region.
19. I call on the leaders of the Arab and Muslim world, to join us in speaking to our populations of peace rather than conflict, of reasons to cooperate, rather than reasons to boycott.
20. In November of this year, I will sit alongside my Arab and Muslim colleagues at two international gatherings: the World Summit on the Information Society, in Tunisia; and the summit of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, in Barcelona.
21. I call upon the international community and my Arab and Muslim counterparts to work together with us to ensure that those meetings result in concrete projects that will help reinforce our peace efforts on the ground.
22. This is also the time for the international community to renew its investment in the future of the Middle East by reviving the multilateral track of the Middle East peace talks.
23. **Just one week ago, Israel completed the evacuation of all Israeli communities in the Gaza Strip.**
24. **Entire families — many of whom had lived and tilled those lands for three generations — were called upon by their Government to leave and to begin their lives anew.**
25. **Today, there are no more Israelis in Gaza.**
26. **Israeli military rule is now over.**
27. **Responsibility for the affairs of Gaza and its residents is now in Palestinian hands.**
28. **Israel’s actions have opened the door to a new future,**
29. **and we invite our neighbours to walk with us together through that door.**
30. **We are committed to the road map, and we wish to get back to its full implementation.**
31. **To do that, we need a partner.**
32. **A partner who is committed, as we are, to the peaceful resolution of our differences, and to the democratic and universal principles on which peace is founded.**
33. **Israel attaches great importance to the Palestinian assumption of responsibility.**
34. **In it lies the key to progress towards peace.**
35. **The transfer of responsibility for Gaza provides the Palestinian side with the chance to take their fate into their own hands; an opportunity not just to say that they want to govern, but to show that they are ready and able to do so.**
36. Gaza, we hope, will serve as a model for how the Palestinian Authority can build a functioning, democratic and peaceful society.
37. **Recognizing the significance of this moment, Israel is taking great pains to ensure that Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas is given every opportunity to establish his authority.**
38. **We want to promote conditions that will benefit ordinary Palestinians, without posing a security threat to Israel.**
39. **Israel has expressed its strong support for international aid and assistance for the social and economic development of Gaza, and we are committed to facilitating those efforts.**
40. Constructive international engagement is crucial to the Palestinian Authority’s success.
41. The international community’s priority now must be ensuring that the Palestinian Authority and its institutions can deliver the services and outcomes their people and ours expect and deserve.
42. Economic reconstruction, of course, is not enough.
43. **The Palestinian Authority must also deliver on its commitment to end the campaign of terror against Israel.**
44. **For Israel, security is an issue on which we will never compromise.**
45. **We insist on the end of terror and the dismantlement of its infrastructure, for the safety of our citizens, and so that our peace efforts can succeed.**
46. **Turning Gaza into a model of success requires that the Palestinian Authority act to promote and protect democracy from its enemies.**
47. **Here, as with security, there is no room for discounts.**
48. **Simply holding elections is no guarantee of moderation and responsible government.**
49. **Two days ago in Gaza, the terrorist organization Hamas held a rally of 10,000 armed men dedicated to a holy war against Israel.**
50. **Like Al-Qaida and the other organizations in the global network of terror, Hamas seeks to destroy everything that the international community and the moderates in our region seek to build: tolerance, democracy and peace.**
51. **Hamas is responsible for the deliberate murder of hundreds of Israeli civilians, amongst them scores of women and children.**
52. **Israel cannot and will not grant legitimacy to such an organization.**
53. **We will not cooperate with its desire to participate in the forthcoming Palestinian elections.**
54. **And we call on the international community to make clear its own opposition to the inclusion of such terrorists in the democratic process.**
55. **If Gaza is indeed to be the positive model we all wish to see, then it is those who promote dialogue, not violence, who must be empowered.**
56. The central threat to global security and to renewed momentum towards dialogue and peace in the Middle East today is Iran and its nuclear ambitions.
57. As the speech before this Assembly by the newly elected president of Iran so clearly demonstrated, Iran’s fanatic regime remains determined to proceed with its nuclear weapons programme.
58. Israel welcomes the efforts of the international community — in particular France, Britain and Germany, backed by the United States — to deny Iran the ability to terrorize the world with nuclear weapons.
59. The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency is meeting at this very moment in Vienna to discuss this urgent matter.
60. I call on them to stop this evil regime from acquiring nuclear weapons.
61. The security and stability of the entire globe is at stake.
62. This is why it is essential and urgent that the Security Council take action.
63. The international community must rally as one and use all the means at its disposal to stop Iran before it goes nuclear.
64. We must not allow the fate of mankind to rest in the hands of the tyrants of Tehran.
65. In January of this year, this Assembly convened in special session to commemorate the Holocaust and pay tribute to the brave soldiers and nations who freed European Jewry and the world from the calamity of that darkest nightmare.
66. Israel commends the community of nations for standing up in unison on this anniversary in commitment to the cry “never again”.
67. We commend the Secretary-General’s and this Assembly’s recognition that Holocaust remembrance must be a universal commitment.
68. Ultimately, it is only the determined defence of the universal values of tolerance and the sanctity of each human life that will protect us from tyranny and extremism.
69. In this spirit, Israel calls on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution initiated by Israel and other like-minded countries commemorating the Holocaust and calling for global educational efforts to ensure that its lessons are learnt.
70. Especially today, the day the world’s greatest Nazi-hunter, Simon Wiesenthal, has passed away, we are reminded that the Holocaust is passing from human memory to history.
71. As the generation of survivors leaves us, who will tell their story, if not us?
72. The special session to commemorate the Holocaust is only one example, of the welcome shift in the attitude of this institution towards Israel.
73. Our recent election as Vice-President of this Assembly is another.
74. I wish to commend the Secretary-General for his unique contribution to this positive trend.
75. Israel’s relations with the United Nations are better today than they have ever been.
76. Nevertheless, they are still far from what they should be.
77. I call on all the States gathered here to examine how they too can contribute to promoting a more balanced and constructive United Nations approach to Israel.
78. The United Nations cannot be true to its own lofty and universal principles, if it continues to waste scarce resources and serve as a forum of hostility and prejudice against one of its own.
79. The United Nations was born of the noble vision to bring the ideals of peace, security and human rights to all peoples.
80. Sadly, reality of the United Nations remains far removed from the United Nations ideal.
81. Major reform is urgent and crucial.
82. Israel joins our fellow Member States and their peoples in the desire to see the United Nations fulfil the vision of its founders; to see the United Nations serving as a force for good in meeting the many challenges of our age.
83. Israel seeks to take its rightful place as a country with full and equal rights in this institution.
84. We seek to realize our full potential to contribute to the global agenda.
85. This is why I have decided to present for the first time Israel’s candidacy for membership on the Security Council.
86. It was the wisest leader of ancient Israel, King Solomon, who wrote, in the book of Ecclesiastes,
87. “For everything there is a season: a time to weep and a time to laugh; … a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.”
88. This is a time for peace.
89. A time for the leaders of the world to work together to bring the blessings of opportunity, peace and prosperity to all humanity.
90. As the Jewish New Year dawns upon us, I extend on behalf of the Jewish people greetings of peace and brotherhood to our Muslim and Arab neighbours and to all nations.