**Mr. Abbas** (Palestine):

1. It gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss on his election to the presidency at this session and to wish him every success in fulfilling his important tasks.
2. We would also like to convey through you, Sir, our thanks to His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for his valuable efforts during his presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.
3. We would like also to express our thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki‑moon for his tireless efforts in strengthening the role and work of the United Nations and its bodies in various fields.
4. **In particular, we greatly appreciate his efforts, and those of the United Nations entities, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which continues to work to provide essential services to Palestinian refugees, who have been waiting for more than 60 years for redress of their plight and the realization of their right to return to their homes and properties.**
5. I am well aware that the agenda of the General Assembly is filled with matters and issues of pressing concern to the entire human race and to our planet, particularly those relating to armed conflict, wars and the struggle of people under foreign occupation to realize their right to self-determination, as well as climate change, global warming, natural disasters and the global economic and financial crises.
6. All of this is happening at a time when we are witnessing rightful demands for the revitalization of the United Nations, particularly reform of the Security Council aimed at making it more representative and truly reflective of the current international situation.
7. This is especially important in the light of the emergence of new Powers, which should be represented in the Security Council in order to enhance its role and effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security.
8. There is also significant discontent over some States’ non-compliance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.
9. This demands that the international community take vigorous, effective measures to compel those countries to respect and implement these resolutions; to end colonization, occupation and exploitation in our world so as to promote the values of freedom, justice, tolerance and coexistence; and to combat extremism and terrorism.
10. Indeed, the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in promoting cooperative relations among peoples and guiding them towards investment in the development of societies and infrastructure, as well as in fighting poverty, unemployment, desertification, disease and epidemics and the lethal human and environmental risks they pose for humanity and the future of our planet.
11. **Our people, our homeland, Palestine, and our region, the Middle East, are facing extremely serious problems that continue to push them towards violence and conflict, wasting chance after chance to seriously address the issues faced by the peoples of the region and to arrive at comprehensive and bold solutions.**
12. **This is the result of the expansionist and hegemonic mentality that still prevails in the ideology and policies of Israel, the occupying Power, whose standard policy is non-compliance with internationally legitimate resolutions, including those of the General Assembly and the Security Council.**
13. **Such disrespect has rendered those resolutions ineffective, undermined the credibility of the United Nations and bolstered the prevailing view that double standards are in effect, particularly regarding the Palestinian question, and that Israel is a State above the law, flouting all these resolutions and engaging in oppression, arrests, detentions, killings, destruction, demolition of homes, blockades, settlement expansion and the establishment of the annexation apartheid wall, violating and undermining the existence and the rights of our people in their own homeland.**
14. **The ancient city of East Jerusalem, capital of the independent State of Palestine and designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site requiring protection, is being subjected by Israel, the occupying Power, to actions that alter and distort realities on the ground.**
15. **Such actions destroy landmarks, cemeteries and the religious, spiritual and historical identity of the holy city in every aspect and as quickly as possible, aiming to erase its historical character and pre-empt final status negotiations.**
16. **This is in addition to the continuous excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque, the demolition of homes, the deportations and revocation of the residency rights of its population and the imposition of a siege on the city in an attempt to isolate it from its natural Palestinian Arab surroundings and to control it geographically and demographically.**
17. **This situation is a provocation to our people.**
18. **It antagonizes them and gives rise to anger, especially in the Arab and Islamic world.**
19. **It creates instability in our region and constitutes a serious obstacle to the achievement of peace and security.**
20. **All of these illegal Israeli measures and practices must cease.**
21. **This is also the case with regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, which has been subjected to an unjust, illegal and unprecedented land, air and sea blockade in violation of international law and United Nations resolutions.**
22. **It is also the target of harsh Israeli military aggression that has severely damaged its infrastructure.**
23. **This illegal blockade and aggression have resulted in the destruction of the infrastructure and productive capacity of Gaza and destroyed 25 per cent of its homes and nearly 75 per cent of its jobs, leading to widespread unemployment and dependence on international aid.**
24. **The Israeli blockade is preventing our people in Gaza from rebuilding their homes, even though the international donor community has pledged some $5 billion to finance reconstruction.**
25. **The blockade against the Gaza Strip must be lifted immediately and completely,**
26. **and the tragic suffering being inflicted on our people there must be ended as soon as possible.**
27. **We welcome the efforts of the international independent fact-finding mission established by the Human Rights Council concerning the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla, which was carrying humanitarian assistance for our people in the Gaza Strip.**
28. **We welcome the conclusions reached by the mission,**
29. **and we also look forward to the submission by the Panel of Inquiry established by the Secretary-General of its findings to the Security Council.**
30. **To all of this I must add the fact that thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees remain in Israeli jails and detention centres.**
31. **They are all fighting for freedom.**
32. **They must be released and an end must be put to their suffering.**
33. **This is essential for creating a positive environment for the attainment of peace.**
34. **We cannot reach a peace agreement that does not liberate all of them from their chains and their imprisonment.**
35. **In spite of all of this and despite the historic injustice that has been inflicted upon our people, their desire to achieve a just peace that guarantees the realization of their national rights in freedom and independence has not and will not diminish.**
36. **Our wounded hands are still able to carry the olive branch picked from the splinters of the trees that the occupation forces uproot every day.**
37. **Our people aspire to live in security, peace and stability on their Palestinian national soil, to build the lives and future of our generations.**
38. **We are willing and ready to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on rights and justice and on the resolutions of international legitimacy.**
39. **Such a settlement must lead to the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from all the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, so that the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as their capital, can enjoy independence and sovereignty and so that peace can prevail throughout the Middle East.**
40. **Because of our genuine desire to attain a comprehensive peace in the region, we have decided to enter into final status negotiations.**
41. **We will exert every effort to reach an agreement for Palestinian-Israeli peace within one year, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative, the road map and the vision of the two-State solution.**
42. **On behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, we have reaffirmed our commitment to the option of just peace and our determination, seriousness and sincere intention to make these negotiations succeed, in spite of all the difficulties and obstacles before us.**
43. **The international community should draw lessons from the reasons for the faltering of the political process and the inability to achieve its goals in the past.**
44. **Restoring the credibility of the peace process mainly requires compelling the Government of Israel to comply with its obligations and commitments.**
45. **In particular, the Government of Israel must cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in and around East Jerusalem; dismantle the apartheid annexation wall; and put an end to the policy of blockade and closures that restrict the lives and movement of our people and deprive them of their basic human rights.**
46. **Our demands for the freezing of settlement activities, the lifting of the blockade and an end to all other illegal Israeli practices do not constitute preconditions that are alien to the political process.**
47. **Rather, they are consistent with the implementation of previous obligations and commitments which have been repeatedly reaffirmed in all the resolutions adopted since the start of the political process.**
48. **Israel’s implementation of these obligations and commitments will lead to the creation of the necessary environment for the success of the negotiations and will give credibility to its pledge to implement the final agreement.**
49. **Israel must choose between peace and the continuation of settlements.**
50. **From this rostrum, I reaffirm that we will continue, as we have always done, to make every possible effort so that these negotiations will achieve the desired objective of realizing peace by addressing all final status issues, namely Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, water, security and the release of all prisoners and detainees.**
51. **This must be done in a manner that will achieve freedom, independence and justice for the Palestinian people in their homeland, rectify the historical injustice inflicted upon them, achieve security and safety for all their neighbours, lead to a just peace throughout the Middle East, including on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and thus usher in a new era of stability, progress, prosperity, coexistence and good-neighbourliness.**
52. **The political process will be put back on the right track only if the international community assumes the main responsibility for ending the Israeli occupation, the longest occupation in modern history; ensures our people’s right to self-determination in their independent sovereign State based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital; and finds a just and agreed solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees.**
53. **This must all be carried out through the implementation of the principles of the Charter, the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and the provisions of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.**
54. **All of these measures constitute the legitimate political terms of reference for any successful negotiation leading to a final peace settlement.**
55. **Our people, despite the profound and continued suffering they have endured, hold steadfast to their rights, their land and their national soil.**
56. At the same time, they are determined to restore national unity and the bonds between the two parts of our homeland.
57. We are making every effort to restore unity through dialogue and the good, honourable efforts of our brothers and friends, especially the Arab Republic of Egypt.
58. On our part, we will spare no effort to end the division resulting from the coup against Palestinian legitimacy and to establish democracy as an essential foundation of our body politic.
59. We will also assume our responsibility for building national institutions for our independent State and national economy, and for ensuring the security and safety of our citizens under a national authority based on the rule of law, accountability, transparency and justice.
60. **We will also continue to fulfil our obligations under the road map and the agreements reached between the two sides.**
61. **In conclusion, it is imperative in this context to express our appreciation to all those who have contributed to sponsoring and supporting the peace process.**
62. **Here, I would like to express my special thanks to His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, who affirmed in his statement before the Assembly two days ago the two-State solution and the need to freeze settlement activities and establish the independent State of Palestine with full membership in the United Nations next year.**
63. **On this occasion, we reaffirm our readiness to cooperate fully with his country’s efforts for a successful political process to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the region.**
64. **We must also pay tribute to the United Nations for preserving our cause and extending a helping hand to our people through its resolutions and decisions, which constitute an unshakeable foundation for peace.**
65. **From this rostrum, we call on the United Nations to continue its pivotal role until justice is upheld, our people have regained their usurped rights and peace prevails in our entire region.**
66. **We reiterate our appreciation for the Organization’s tireless efforts to stand in solidarity with the just cause of Palestine,**
67. **and we reaffirm our faith in the peace to which we and all the peoples in the region aspire.**
68. **We ask God to bless us with a future in which we will all enjoy peace, security and stability.**

**Mr. Liberman** (Israel):

1. When I arrived yesterday in New York, I received a phone call from the chairman of one of the Jewish organizations, who asked me how I was coping with all the pressure that is being placed on Israel.
2. “Surely”, he said, “it must be very difficult”.
3. I recalled an old joke, which tells of five Jews who changed the way we see the world: Moses, law is everything; Jesus, love is everything; Marx, money is everything; Freud, sex is everything; and Einstein, everything is relative.
4. So, I told him that everything is relative.
5. On one hand, it is very difficult.
6. On the other hand, it is easier than before, because now we have a stable coalition and a stable Government and we have the support of a majority of Israel’s citizens.
7. **We are ready for a fair solution and we are ready to cooperate with the international community.**
8. **However, we are not ready to compromise our national security or the vital interests of the State of Israel.**
9. **At the outset, I want to emphasize that, contrary to what is often presented in the international media, the political arena in Israel is not divided between those who seek peace and those who seek war.**
10. **Everyone wants peace, and the controversy in Israel centres on the specific question of how to achieve this peace, how to reach security and stability in the region.**
11. **And the question is: why, in the 17 years since we signed the Oslo Accords, have we not arrived at a comprehensive agreement signifying the end of the conflict and the removal of future mutual claims?**
12. **Despite all of the efforts of all the good people with the best of intentions, including Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert; despite the summit meetings at Camp David between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat with the presence of former President Bill Clinton;**
13. **and despite the Annapolis Summit between Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas, we are today still in deadlock.**
14. **In fact, contrary to the prevalent view that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the heart of the instability in the Middle East or is the main reason for the region’s numerous conflicts, the reality is entirely different.**
15. **More than 90 per cent of the wars and war victims of the Middle East since the Second World War did not result from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and are in no way connected to Israel.**
16. Rather, they stem from conflicts involving Muslims or conflicts between Arab States.
17. The Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war, the wars between North and South Yemen, the Hama atrocities in Syria, and the wars in Algeria and Lebanon — these are just a few examples from a list that goes on and on.
18. **The second flawed explanation for the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians that has gained popularity is that the root of the problem is the so-called occupation, the settlements in Judea and Samaria and the settlers themselves.**
19. **Only the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, so the argument goes, will ensure peace in the region.**
20. **It is sufficient to state a number of well-known facts in order to refute that claim.**
21. **First, all of Judea, Samaria and Gaza were under Arab control for 19 years, between 1948 and 1967.**
22. **During those 19 years, no one tried to create a Palestinian State.**
23. Peace agreements were achieved with Egypt and Jordan, despite the presence of settlements.
24. **And the opposite is also true: we evacuated 21 flourishing settlements in Gush Katif and transferred more than 10,000 Jews.**
25. **And, in return, we have Hamas in power and thousands of missiles landing on Sderot and southern Israel.**
26. **Another misguided argument is the claim that the Palestinian issue prevents a determined international front against Iran.**
27. **This argument is not only flawed, it is completely irresponsible.**
28. The same argument could be made that the Palestinian issue prevents action on North Korea, piracy in Somalia, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan or the challenge of Afghanistan.
29. Just as the Khomeini Revolution had nothing to do with the Palestinian issue, neither is the Iranian decision to develop nuclear weapons related.
30. **In truth, the connection between Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is precisely the contrary.**
31. **Iran can exist without Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah,**
32. **but the terrorist organizations cannot exist without Iran.**
33. **Relying on those proxies, Iran can, at any given time, foil any agreement between Israel and the Palestinians or with Lebanon.**
34. **Thus, in searching for a durable agreement with the Palestinians, one that will deal with the true roots of the conflict and will endure for many years, one must understand that, first, the Iranian issue must be resolved.**
35. **One must deal first with the root cause of the problem, and not its symptoms.**
36. **There are, of course, yet other problems that must be solved; solving that one would not be sufficient, but it is nevertheless a necessary condition.**
37. **In trying to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, we are dealing with two types of problems: emotional problems and practical problems.**
38. **That is why the solution must also be a two-stage one.**
39. **The emotional problems are, first and foremost, the utter lack of confidence between the sides and issues such as Jerusalem, recognition of Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people, and refugees.**
40. **Under those conditions, we should focus on coming up with a long-term intermediate agreement, something that could take a few decades.**
41. **We need to raise an entire new generation that will have mutual trust and will not be influenced by incitement and extremist messages.**
42. **To achieve a final status agreement, we must understand that the primary practical obstacle is the friction between the two nations.**
43. **As is true everywhere, where there are two nations, two religions or two languages with competing claims to the same land, there is friction and conflict.**
44. **Countless examples of ethnic conflict around the world confirm this, whether in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Africa, the Far East or the Middle East.**
45. **Where effective separation has been achieved, conflict has either been avoided or has been dramatically reduced or resolved.**
46. **Consider the cases of the former Yugoslav republics, the split-up of Czechoslovakia and the independence of East Timor as cases in point.**
47. **Thus, the guiding principle for a final status agreement must not be land-for-peace but rather, exchange of populated territory.**
48. **Let me be very clear:**
49. **I am not speaking about moving populations, but rather about moving borders to better reflect demographic realities.**
50. **This is not an extraordinary insight and is far less controversial than some may seek to claim.**
51. In fact, precisely this notion — that a mismatch between borders and nationalities is a recipe for conflict — has long been accepted as a virtual truism in the academic community.
52. Leading scholars and highly respected research institutions have even coined the term “rightsizing the State” to capture the idea that States and nations must be in balance in order to ensure peace.
53. This is not a controversial political policy.
54. It is an empirical truth.
55. But beyond empirical truth there is historical truth, namely, the almost 4,000 years during which the Jewish people were born in the land of Israel and developed the corpus of ethical and intellectual treasures that have been instrumental in the rise of Western civilization.
56. The 2,000 years of forced exile and interim conquest by Byzantines, Arabs, Mamelukes, Ottomans and others cannot and never will impair the unbreakable bonds of the Jewish people to its homeland.
57. Israel is not only where we are, it is who we are.
58. In closing, let me remind everyone in this Hall of the quote on the plaza across from the United Nations,
59. words spoken in Jerusalem almost 3,000 years ago by the Jewish prophet Isaiah:
60. “They shall beat their swords into plow-shares and their spears into pruning hooks;
61. nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”
62. **Inspired by the deep wisdom embodied in these words, let us hope that the path to true peace prophesied by Isaiah will guide our two peoples, in two nation-States, living in peace and security.**