



Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
57 Park Avenue New York, NY. 10016 Tel. (212) 679-4760 Fax. (212) 685-8741
www.guatemalaun.org

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**STATEMENT OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUATEMALA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE OPEN DEBATE OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

(April 23, 2012)

Madame President,

We appreciate your having organized this session, and we thank Robert Serry for his opening remarks, as well as to the Permanent Representatives of Palestine and Israel.

Taking account of the fact that the situation in the Middle East is a topic on our agenda each month, one could argue that it becomes increasingly difficult to say something original as compared to what was said in the last or previous session. However, on the other hand, in the past years the panorama has evolved so rapidly, and with contradictory tendencies, that we have come to accept that frequently revisiting this topic is actually justified. The fact that we have met on two occasions during the week-end in the past ten days to consider the case of Syria is a testimony to the above.

Madame President,

Indeed, Syria is very much on our mind when looking at the Middle East today. But, of course, we cannot look at that country in an isolated manner. The so-called Arab Spring, which is looking ever less than the image of “Spring”, showed a propensity for events in any single country to rapidly spill over into its neighbors. It also showed its capacity to divide the international community, and even the League of Arab States, not only regarding the interpretation of what was going on, but also regarding how to react to situations that clearly had the risk of spinning out of control.

In a way, reality in the Middle East goes beyond the imagination of any attempt to translate it into fiction. It involves several ingredients: grass roots movements rebelling against authoritarian Governments in the traditional mold, and these using methods of repression that also are vestiges of the past; the risk of ancestral rivalries of ethnic or religious nature that not only run counter to contemporary values such as tolerance, coexistence, and solidarity, but also have the potential to rapidly propagate themselves to the whole region; and, as a positive element, the awakening of the League of Arab States, which assessed early-on the import of what was in play, and found in its movement the capacity to respond – weakly, perhaps, but nevertheless to respond – to the challenge.

Let us add to these elements the oft-postponed Palestinian People’s demand for a homeland, and the specter of introducing into the region in the near future a new danger

with the possible incursion of weapons of mass destruction, and the potentially explosive nature of what is happening in this part of the world will be clearly understood. Who would put in doubt that tangible threats to international peace and security are present? Who would doubt that this matter falls in the purview of this Council? And who would doubt that the complex panorama also offers multiple opportunities for this Council to exercise said purview in a positive manner, contributing, together with actors of the region, to find ways to overcome the multiple crisis and attain the vision of two States, including Palestine, a more prosperous, more democratic and more inclusive region, exempt from the present grave tensions that affect it?

Naturally, neither my delegation nor, I suspect, any delegation sitting around this table has holistic solutions to address such solidly rooted tensions, in a heterogeneous region where each country is a special case. However, united, and especially partnering with the League of Arab States, we can make a contribution: first, to avoid that the existing crises detonate in our hands, and, second, to offer ideas and perhaps concrete mechanisms which will assist the directly involved countries to find their own way.

Madame President,

Guatemala has presented its more detailed position on the various subjects covered by the Middle East – the situation between Israel and Palestine, the situation between Israel and its other neighbors, the situation in Lebanon, and the situation in another half dozen sovereign states. It is unnecessary on this occasion to repeat our specific position on each of these matters. It is for this reason that we have centered our remarks on a more general reflection. But I conclude reaffirming what I said at the beginning, in that we accept that the situation in the Middle East as an agenda item clearly justifies our constant follow-up.

Thank you.