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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GERT ROSENTHAL
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON
THE SITUATION ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION
(15 OCTOBER 2012)**

We would like to thank the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffery Feltman, for the presentation he has given us today on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

Again we participate in this quarterly debate, which aims to revise the long-standing problems that continue to be a source of tension in the Middle East. On this occasion, and not to detract from the urgency and concern about other conflicts that are affecting the region, my intervention will focus on three issues: first, the peace process in the Middle East and the Palestinian question, in particular the economic crisis that the Palestinian Authority is facing; second, the security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and obstacles to restarting the peace process between Israel and Palestine; and, third, the situation in Syria.

Regarding the first point, the recent reports that the World Bank has provided over the economic outlook in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the ongoing protests about the economic situation are cause for concern. It is necessary to phase out the dependence on humanitarian aid, for which it is necessary to work towards the correct application of the Paris Protocol. For our Government, and without negating the importance of official cooperation, free trade is a necessary tool for the development of peoples. Similarly, we believe that trade opens the door to create links that can help build trust and peace between Israel and Palestine. However, to achieve this it is necessary for the parties to see the importance of mutual cooperation for economic and social development of both.

Regarding the second point, we see the security situation in the Occupied Territories as a corollary of the economic situation. Coming from a region where poverty still persists, we know that hunger irritates even the most patient man, especially if his children are suffering from this phenomenon. While the Palestinian people are experiencing the dire consequences of poverty, it will be difficult to achieve a lasting peace. It is important to stress that we are not talking about temporary aid, which serves only to maintain the status quo; we must focus on helping the Palestinian people work freely to enjoy the fruits of their work, without limits or interference.

With regard to the third point, in recent days we have seen two consequences of the conflict in Syria: one positive and another one negative. Regarding the former, it seems to pass almost unnoticed that for the first time since the adoption of Resolution 2043 (2012) last April, the Council was able to adopt last week not one but two press statements relating to Syria. This suggests that we should not give up hope that with greater unity, the Council could provide much more robust and efficient responses to the widespread violence that now engulfs the entire country. On the negative side, we are struck that the cannons on the border between Syria and Turkey continue to launch mortars across the border that separates them, but neither party has appeared before the Security Council since the previous Friday. This shows the little relevance that we seem to have, while the membership does not close ranks and act with one voice; or, what amounts to be the same, the skepticism with which some countries perceive this Council to address the situation in Syria.

Finally, our government maintains its position that, to achieve a lasting peace in the region, there must be an agreement between Israel and Palestine to establish a Palestinian state. Few still believe in the viability of the two-state solution, living in peace behind secure borders. This is a paradox, when in fact it is the only solution

to lasting stability. As we have stated in the past, it is the parties who must demonstrate, in particular, their interest in seeking a solution, commit to negotiating an agreement, to show their good faith during negotiations and implement confidence-building measures to advance the process. In light of the current situation, however, we can only hope that the parties' inaction towards this end does not mean the absolute impossibility of reaching an agreement, which would result in prolonging the conflict in the region.

My delegation believes that respect for international law in the case of the peace process in the Middle East is the key to the future of the Middle East. This respect should be observed not only for Israel and Palestine, but for the entire international community.

Thank you.