

*Statement by H.E. Ambassador Azmi Aldaqqa, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Poland, before the High Level Segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Warsaw, Poland, November 21<sup>st</sup> 2013;*

Mr. President

At the outset, I wish to extend to the Government and people of Poland our appreciation for your hospitality and for hosting this important event, which addresses an issue of central importance, indeed of survival, to all of us. Our admiration also goes to, President of the conference and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres, for the manner in which they ran the work of our conference.

Allow me to begin by affirming that the State of Palestine associates itself with the statement made by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We also wish to express our deepest and heartfelt condolences to and solidarity with the people and government of the Philippines as they continue to exert such extraordinary effort to overcome the devastation and loss of life that accompanied

Super Typhoon Haiyan. We wish the Philippine people early success in overcoming this disaster.

Mr. President

These disasters prove once again that collective action is key to our success, as without it, we simply cannot confront the scientifically proven threat to our very existence. It is also indisputable that developing countries are the most affected by the dangerous effects of climate change since they are the least able to deal with them. Evasion of responsibility is simply not an option since we all face the negative impacts of climate change. That is why a spirit that reinforces global partnership and ensures results through actions must guide us through this conference and beyond.

Urgent action is our only way to mitigate the damage that has already been done to our environment. This action must guarantee that developing countries are not denied their right to sustainable development through economic, social development and environmental protection. It must also take into consideration historical responsibility, and adhere to the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities. Our actions should also take into consideration the

compelling findings of the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Pending the development of another legally binding instrument under the Convention, we believe that our efforts to face the global challenge of climate change should depend on implementing obligations in already existing instruments. Chiefly, the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, being the only legally binding instrument, as well as the Rio principles on environment and development, are essential pillars that can guide our current and future efforts. Furthermore, key outcomes of UN Climate Change Conferences in Copenhagen, Cancun, Durban and Doha must be upheld and built upon.

Mr. President,

Palestine has taken major steps to combat climate change. The protection of the environment in the State of Palestine holds an important place in the national policy agenda, which is focused on the need to exert efforts to protect the environment and ensure its sustainability for future generations. We work hard to uphold our share of the collective responsibility to combat climate change

despite our situation as a people still shackled by foreign military occupation.

Despite the difficulties posed by occupation, the State of Palestine has incorporated Environmental considerations into its state-Building efforts. The Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority monitors and coordinates national efforts to combat climate change and to protect the environment. Palestine has also achieved substantial progress on the legal front pertaining to the protection of the environment. The Palestinian Environmental Law, approved in 1999, establishes the general legal framework for environmental protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Policies for environmental protection have been prepared in cooperation and coordination with all ministries. Several sub-strategies have also been drawn up, such as the solid waste strategy and the comprehensive plan on dangerous waste, an emergency plan to protect nature, and the national strategy to fight desertification and adapt to climate change.

The Palestinian Government has also developed a National Strategy for Adaptation and conducting several Climate Change Awareness Campaigns. We are also preparing a National Adaptation Program of Action, Initial Communication Report and

Climate Change National Capacity Assessment in addition to implementing some pilot projects in the field of adaptation.

As an observer State in the United Nations General Assembly, The State of Palestine has actively participated in multilateral environmental agreements conferences and meetings. Palestine also participates in regional arrangements concerning the environment within the Arab League and Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Palestine also continues to cooperate closely with the United Nations, and its organs and agencies, on the implementation of various environment-related activities.

Palestine will also continue preparations to accede to the UNFCCC and other international treaties related to Climate protection. We look forward to our positive contribution as a member State in the future in order to play our role, along with the rest of the international community, in confronting the effects of climate change.

Mr. President,

Despite all its well-intentioned efforts, the State of Palestine continues to face challenges that make environmental management

a very hard task. At the heart of this lies the continued Israeli occupation that fragments the Palestinian land, obstructs efforts to implement the measures required to protect the environment, controls and illegally exploits natural resources, including land and water, destroys vital infrastructure, including water, as well as razes lands and uproots trees in order to establish illegal settlements, annexation wall and expand bypass roads. Furthermore, the practices outlined above are accompanied by lax environmental regulations awarded to industries in the illegal settlements, resulting in the dumping of untreated sewage and wastewater, including untreated industrial waste from factories, into the valleys, streams, and underground water across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The United Nations documented that illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, generate 54 million cubic meters of domestic wastewater annually, with much of it entering the environment untreated.

Apart from wastewater, solid waste from the illegal settlements is dumped without restriction on Palestinian lands, fields and side roads, or is burned. Several polluting industries were relocated from Israel to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including aluminium, tanning, plastics and electroplating, and do not abide

by any environmental laws. The industrial waste produced by these industries and other Israeli industries illegally located in the West Bank is disposed of on the nearby Palestinian agricultural lands, thereby constituting a threat to the environment. Needless to say, these practices degrade vegetation cover, biodiversity and landscape as well as pose documented threat to the health and livelihoods of our people in affected areas.

Finally Mr. President, allow me to remind that through the illegal practices and policies I have just outlined, the Occupying Power violates all norms and protocols aimed at combating climate change. Hence, we reiterate that collective responsibility requires that we do not shy away from addressing the special environmental needs of peoples living under occupation. Occupied peoples, like the rest of the people of the world, have a right to sustainable development and environmental protection and those rights should not be neglected or ignored. In our march to strengthen the foundations of the independent State of Palestine, we call upon you to lend us a hand in making this heartfelt and successful effort a comprehensive reality; one that offers our children the promise of freedom and a safe environment.

Thank you Mr. President