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**SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON THE MIDDLE EAST,
MAY 11, 2009**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. RUHAKANA RUGUNDA,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York

May 11, 2009

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Mr. President,

My delegation welcomes you and Colleague Ministers to New York for this Open Debate on the Middle East. We thank you for organizing this debate at this time and level. It is a clear testimony of the commitment of the Security Council and the international community to the ongoing efforts towards resolution of the Middle East conflict and to ensure lasting peace and security in the region.

We also welcome the Secretary General and thank him for his briefing on the overall situation in the Middle East; the progress made so far, the challenges, and what more needs to be done.

Uganda commends the efforts and initiatives of the Quartet, Egypt, the Arab League, and other actors in this regard.

Mr. President,

We are convinced that a durable solution to the Middle East conflict can only be achieved through negotiations and agreement amongst the parties concerned.

We continue to support all the parties in the Middle East in their efforts to achieve comprehensive peace based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace with secure and recognized borders, as envisaged in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

We call upon both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to remain committed to the irreversibility of the

bilateral negotiations built upon previous agreements and obligations.

Mr. President,

On the situation in Gaza, my delegation is encouraged by the reduction in the number of incidents since the last briefing. We welcome the summary report of the Secretary General on the Board of Inquiry.

However, we are still concerned that the situation remains fragile. There is still no permanent ceasefire, there remain incidents of violence, and the levels of humanitarian assistance getting into Gaza are below what is urgently required.

There is urgent need for a durable and fully respected ceasefire, re-opening of the crossing points as envisioned in Resolution 1860 (2009). We reiterate our commendation to Egypt and other parties for the role they continue to play in facilitating the cease-fire talks between Israel and Palestine.

We are also concerned that divisions among the Palestinian groups persist, and call upon them to resolve their differences through dialogue.

Mr President,

We note with concern that while US\$4.5 billion was pledged in March 2009 during the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, the provision of immediately needed materials for reconstruction has not been possible mainly due to the blockade. We

therefore call for urgent implementation of the recovery and reconstruction programs in Gaza.

The situation in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory also raises concern. We note from the briefing that there has been significant rise in settlers' activities in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We therefore call for an end to all settlement activities.

Mr. President,

On Lebanon, Uganda welcomes the improvement in the political and security situation. We commend the steps taken to improve relations between Lebanon and Syria, including the establishment of diplomatic relations. My delegation also welcomes the commitment by the Lebanese leadership to holding free and fair parliamentary elections scheduled for June 7, 2009

Mr. President,

My delegation is convinced that we urgently need to give a new impetus to the search for a resolution to the conflict in the Middle East.

In this regard, Uganda fully supports the proposal by the Russian Federation to convene, in consultation with the Quartet and the parties, an international conference on the Middle East peace process in Moscow this year.

Finally, Uganda wishes to thank the Russian Delegation for the draft Presidential Statement which we fully support.

Thank you.