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Churches ^{for}
MIDDLE EAST PEACE

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
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GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES:
WOMEN'S DIVISION

Statement on Palestinian Initiative at the United Nations

September 21, 2011

In the face of confrontation at the United Nations, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) reasserts our deeply held belief that there is an urgent and immediate need for a just and sustainable resolution to the conflict in the Holy Land. The Palestinian bid for recognition at the United Nations is a nonviolent response to a broken peace process that has achieved too little progress toward peace in the past 18 years. For years, cries of "Peace, peace," rang out, yet there is no peace and few steps toward healing the collective wounds of this conflict.

CMEP strongly believes that a vote at the United Nations cannot replace direct negotiations between the parties and a negotiated peace agreement. However, the status quo is not sustainable. As Christians we seek to "let the peace of Christ rule our hearts" (*Colossians 3:14-15*) and restore dignity to all of our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land, Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike.

It is time to consider how to translate actions at the United Nations into the next steps toward peace. Genuine and bold U.S. leadership is necessary to return Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table immediately. U.S. reengagement must include a comprehensive approach to all final status issues in the conflict and there must be a realistically short horizon for a political agreement, not open-ended negotiations that provide little incentive for either party to make the sacrifices necessary to resolve this conflict. U.S. leadership also requires continued foreign aid to Palestinians.

Continued financial support of the Palestinian government and humanitarian efforts are in the interests of all -- Israelis, Palestinians, and people in the United States. Like several Jewish-American organizations working here in the United States, CMEP strongly opposes threats to cut off aid to the Palestinian government and people in an effort to punish them for actions at the UN. Continued aid to Palestinians supports Israeli security interests as well as the safety and stability for peoples throughout the region. We believe that drastic cuts to aid are dangerous, short-sighted, and will cripple future efforts to achieve a peace that benefits us all.