

Mr President,

Norway is deeply concerned over the lack of effective protection of vulnerable groups in armed conflict, both in the Middle East as well as throughout the world. The role of humanitarian agencies and workers are increasingly under threat. International humanitarian law needs to be protected, defended and expanded. All parties to a conflict must respect International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law.

Norway has since the outburst of the Gaza conflict emphasized that the parties to the conflict bear the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute possible violations conducted by forces under their command. This requires the establishment of adequate and efficient follow up mechanisms by both parties to the conflict.

This is necessary not only to prevent impunity. It is also in line with our general view that the alternative to the rule of law is not only a society where power prevails over justice. It is also a society without long-term peace and prosperity prospects.

Mr President,

The report of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict is thorough and well prepared. A substantial amount of documentation is included in the Report. The report deserves to be treated in a serious manner by the Human Rights Council.

The report raises allegations of the most serious nature. It alleges that both Israel and Palestinian groups may have been responsible for grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. In the follow-up of the recommendations in the report complex challenges will have to be addressed, inter alia due to the fact that the recommendations are directed towards both state and non-state actors.

The Goldstone-report is clearly an important test of the Human Rights Council. It is a test of the ability of the Council to add value to other parts of the UN system with regard to the situation in the Middle East. And it is a test of the ability of the Council to take decisions aiming first and foremost at protecting and promoting human rights on the ground. We are not convinced that this Special Session is helpful in this regard.

Norway participated actively in the debate following Justice Goldstone's presentation of the report to the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. The comments we made then on the report are still valid. We also engaged in the consultations on the draft resolution with the aim of contributing to a consensual outcome. It is our firm view that only through a clear and credible message that enjoys broad support can the Human Rights Council play a constructive role on this issue.

Mr President,

Norway is still determined to contribute to a meaningful and credible process on the Goldstone-report in the Human Rights Council. We hope to see the same commitment from all other members.