



United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

**General Assembly
Official Records
Sixty-eighth Session
Supplement No. 35**

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United Nations • New York, 2013

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Letter of transmittal

[7 October 2013]

Mr. Secretary-General,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 2 of its resolution [67/20](#) of 30 November 2012.

The report covers the period from 7 October 2012 to 6 October 2013.

(Signed) Abdou Salam **Diallo**
Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I

Introduction

1. The reporting period witnessed a historic vote by the General Assembly on 29 November 2012 that granted Palestine non-member observer State status at the United Nations. Its adoption reflected the international consensus on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to freedom in their own sovereign State and consensus on the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the growing international impatience with the long-standing Israeli occupation and the growing sense of urgency to achieve a just and peaceful solution to the conflict.

2. The Government of Israel reacted negatively to the General Assembly vote by declaring plans to construct thousands of new settlement units, in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, and by withholding the transfer of Palestinian tax and customs revenues, in violation of agreements reached. Israel continued to announce and approve settlement construction plans even after the resumption of peace talks was announced in July after months of mediation by the United States.

3. Two weeks before the General Assembly vote, Israel launched a large-scale, eight-day military offensive in the Gaza Strip, in which 165 Palestinians were killed, more than half of them civilians, and some 1,400 were injured, including many children. Six Israelis, including three civilians, were killed as a result of rocket fire. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remained critical, with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The long-standing restrictions on the movement of people and goods, imposed by Israel since 2007 in the form of a blockade, continued to undermine the living conditions of the 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza. Reconstruction and rehabilitation also continued to be hampered by the blockade. Rocket and mortar fire by armed Palestinian groups into southern Israel also continued, endangering the lives of the Israeli population.

4. Israel continued its frequent military raids and incursions in the West Bank, resulting in the killing and injuring of Palestinians, including children. While overshadowed by reports of the release of some Palestinian prisoners by Israel as part of a goodwill gesture, at least 3,583 Palestinians, including women and children, were arrested in over 3,000 arrest operations during the reporting period alone, in addition to the thousands of Palestinians that remain in Israeli jails and detention centres. Many unarmed civilians were subjected to the excessive use of force by the Israeli occupying forces during demonstrations against the occupation. Israel continued to expand its illegal settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and approved thousands more new settlement units. The construction of the separation wall continued in defiance of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion (2004), resulting in further confiscation of Palestinian land and demolition of properties, further harming socioeconomic conditions and causing the displacement of more Palestinian families. The situation in Occupied East Jerusalem remained alarming, with continued land confiscations, house demolitions and evictions of Palestinian residents, and the intensification of acts of aggression and vandalism against Christian and Muslim holy sites in the City.

5. The Palestinian State-building efforts continued to be challenged by a serious budget deficit as well as by restrictions and obstacles imposed by Israel on the

Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which continued to prevent the normal movement of persons and goods, economic activity and sustained development and growth. In addition, a decrease in foreign aid and the failure of donor countries to fulfil their financial pledges contributed to the dire situation.

6. During the reporting period, the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Bureau focused on mobilizing wide support for ending the Israeli occupation and realizing the two-State solution, in order for the Palestinian people to achieve its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination. In that context, the Committee welcomed the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in August with the active mediation of the United States. The Committee monitored the situation on the ground and the political developments, implemented its programme of international meetings and conferences, held consultations with representatives of Governments, national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as civil society, and reached out to its partners worldwide using new communications media. The Committee reiterated its position of principle that a permanent settlement of the question of Palestine could be reached only by ending the occupation that began in 1967, achieving the independence of the State of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and achieving a just and agreed solution to the Palestine refugees issue on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

7. The annual seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people, organized by the Committee in Rome in February 2013, addressed the challenges and opportunities of developing a self-sustaining economy in the new reality of a State under occupation. The seminar was followed in April by a regional meeting in Addis Ababa that focused on African solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of the sovereignty and independence of the State of Palestine. An international meeting held in Beijing in June focused on reviving collective international engagement towards a two-State solution.

Chapter II

Mandate of the Committee

8. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, as recognized by the Assembly in its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

9. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly (A/31/35) were endorsed by the Assembly as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports,¹ the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The recommendations of the Committee contained in its first report could not be implemented, and each year the Assembly has renewed the Committee's mandate and requested it to intensify efforts in pursuit of its objectives.

10. The Committee has consistently supported the objective of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders on the basis of the 1949 armistice lines, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). The Committee welcomed and supported the Quartet's road map and called upon the parties to implement it. In keeping with its mandate, the Committee has continued to work towards creating conditions for the successful conduct of negotiations on a permanent settlement allowing the Palestinian people to realize its inalienable rights. The Committee has also promoted support and assistance by the international community to the Palestinian people.

11. On 30 November 2012, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (resolution 67/20), requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources to carry out its programme of work (resolution 67/21) and requested the continuation of the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat (resolution 67/22). The Assembly also adopted resolution 67/23, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine".

¹ Since the thirty-first session, the Committee has submitted annual reports to the General Assembly; all such reports have been issued as supplement No. 35 of the sessional documentation of the Assembly.

Chapter III

Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

12. During the reporting period, the Plurinational State of Bolivia joined the Committee as a new member on 22 August 2013.

13. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

14. The observers at the Committee meetings are: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen, as well as the State of Palestine, the African Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

15. At its 348th meeting, on 5 February 2013, the Committee elected Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal) as Chair, Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan) and Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) as Vice-Chairs and Christopher Grima (Malta) as Rapporteur. At its 354th meeting, on 4 October 2013, the Committee decided to elect three additional Vice-Chairs to its Bureau: Desra Percaya (Indonesia), Wilfried Emvula (Namibia) and María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua).

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

16. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all United Nations Member States and observers wishing to participate in the work of the Committee were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, the State of Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all of its meetings and made briefings, observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

Chapter IV

Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

Political developments

17. On 23 September 2011, President Mahmoud Abbas submitted to the Security Council the application of the State of Palestine for admission to full membership in the United Nations. With the application pending before the Council, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/19 on 29 November 2012, which accorded Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 138 in favour to 9 against, with 41 abstentions. Israel rejected the move and reacted immediately by deliberately announcing plans to build over 3,000 settlement units, including in Occupied East Jerusalem, and withholding the transfer of Palestinian tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of Palestinians.

18. International efforts to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks continued to be thwarted by Israel's continued expansion of illegal settlements and other illegal measures, but after months of mediation by the United States, the Secretary of State, John Kerry, announced, in Amman on 19 July 2013, that an agreement had been reached that established a basis for resuming direct final status negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators held a series of preparatory meetings in Washington, D.C., on 29 and 30 July 2013, where they agreed on an agenda towards achieving a final status agreement over the next nine months. On 14 August, the first formal peace talks since September 2010 were held in Jerusalem, hours after Israel, as part of a goodwill gesture to the Palestinians, released 26 Palestinian prisoners who had been detained prior to the signing of the Oslo Accords. The negotiators were to meet weekly thereafter, alternating between Jerusalem and Jericho.

19. During the reporting period, Grenada, Guatemala and Haiti recognized the State of Palestine and Guyana and El Salvador established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine. In addition, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania and Sweden decided to upgrade the status of the Palestinian delegations in the countries to that of an embassy or similar entity.

Settlements

20. Israel, the occupying Power, continued and intensified its illegal settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in August 2013 that, in 2012, the number of settlers in the 144 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had been 563,546 (360,370 in the West Bank and 203,176 in East Jerusalem), an increase of 24,765 compared with 2011.

21. During the reporting period, the following were announced, approved or issued by Israel: tenders for the construction of 72 housing units in the "Ariel" settlement (6 November); the construction of nearly 700 new units in "Itamar" and other areas near Nablus (12 November); the construction of 3,000 new units, including preliminary zoning and planning work for thousands of units in East Jerusalem and settlement blocks, including "Ma'ale Adumim" and the "E1" area (30 November); tenders to build 92 units in "Ma'aleh Adumim" (11 December); an advanced plan to build 523 units in "Gush Ezion" (19 December); the construction of 523 units in

“Gva’ot” (20 December); plans for 170 new units and 84 units in “Rotem” in the Jordan Valley (13 January 2013); tenders for the construction of 114 new units in “Efrat” and 84 in “Kiryat Arba” (16 January); tenders for 128 units in “Beitar Illit” (25 January); plans to build 346 units in “Gush Etzion” (31 January); the construction of 200 new housing units in “Tekoa” and 146 in “Nokdim” (2 February); plans to construct 90 new units in “Beit El” (11 February); 296 new units in “Beit El” (8 May); plans to build more than 1,000 housing units in “Itamar” and “Bruchin” (13 June); the construction of 732 units in “Modi’in Ilit” and 19 in “Kfar Adumim” (17 July); the construction of 230 units in “Ma’on” (6 August); tenders for the construction of 394 units in the West Bank (11 August). In addition, Peace Now reported on 31 October that Israel had actively supported the establishment of two new so-called settlement outposts, “Nahalei Tal” and “Tzofin North”, for the first time since 2005. On 24 December, Israel upgraded a college in the “Ariel” settlement to a university. On 7 January, Israel undertook measures to “legalize” the “Rahim” settlement near Nablus after merging two outposts.

22. In Occupied East Jerusalem, the following were announced, approved or issued: a plan to build 797 housing units west of the “Gilo” settlement (18 October 2012); tenders for the construction of 607 housing units in “Pisgat Ze’ev” and 606 in “Ramot” (6 November); the construction of 1,500 apartments in “Ramat Shlomo” (17 December); the building of 2,612 units in “Givat Hamatos” (19 December); the construction of 1,242 units in “Gilo” (25 December); the construction of an additional 120 units in “Givat Ze’ev” (29 April 2013); the construction of 300 new units in “Ramot” (30 May); the construction of 69 homes in the City (26 June); tenders for the construction of 793 units in the City (11 August); a construction plan for 942 housing units in “Gilo” (13 August). In addition, on 16 January, the “Jerusalem Committee for Planning and Construction” approved the construction of a new college for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) next to the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. On 8 July, the same Committee approved the establishment of a new national park in southern Jerusalem on Palestinian land.

23. The international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, appointed by the Human Rights Council and led by Christine Chanet, Judge of the Court of Cassation of France and member of the Human Rights Committee, published its findings on 31 January 2013 ([A/HRC/22/63](#)), stating that numerous of the human rights of the Palestinian people were being violated owing to the Israeli settlement campaign and stressing that the violations were interrelated and formed part of an overall pattern of breaches characterized principally by the denial of the right to self-determination and systematic discrimination against the Palestinian people occurring daily. Since 1967, the Governments of Israel had openly led, directly participated in, and had full control of the planning, construction, development, consolidation and encouragement of the settlements and private entities had enabled, facilitated and profited from the construction of the settlements. The mission considered that, in relation to the settlements, Israel was committing serious breaches of its obligations under the right to self-determination and certain obligations under international humanitarian law, including the obligation not to transfer its population into the occupied territory and that, in compliance with article 49 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention), Israel must

cease all settlement activities without preconditions. It also stated that ratification by the State of Palestine of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which establishes the jurisdiction of the Court over the deportation or transfer, directly or indirectly, by the occupying Power of parts of its own population into the territory it occupies, might lead to accountability for gross violations of human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and justice for victims.

24. On 19 July, the European Commission published new guidelines, effective 1 January 2014, prohibiting the funding of entities connected to the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem or the Golan Heights. The Commission is also reportedly seeking to draft comprehensive guidelines on labelling settlement products by the end of 2013. In addition, the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands issued a directive on 6 March to all retail chains in the country to state the origin of products from the occupied territories.

Settler violence

25. Settler-related violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continued to be a source of serious concern. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, there were at least 84 incidents leading to Palestinian casualties and 228 incidents leading to damage to Palestinian property or land during the reporting period (as of August 2013). In addition, there were at least 37 incidents leading to Israeli casualties and 8 incidents leading to damage to Israeli property or land. The Office had recorded damage to 7,272 Palestinian-owned olive trees and saplings by settlers in 2013 (as of July). In 2012, over 8,600 trees were reported burned, uprooted or otherwise vandalized.

26. The Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din reported in July 2013 that between 2005 and 2013, only 8.5 per cent of the investigations opened by Israeli authorities following complaints submitted by Palestinians with the organization's assistance had resulted in the indictment of Israelis suspected of harming Palestinians and their property. The international fact-finding mission noted in its report (A/HRC/22/63) that the identities of settlers responsible for violence and intimidation were known to the Israeli authorities, yet these acts continued with impunity, and concluded that there was institutionalized discrimination against the Palestinian people when it came to addressing violence.

Jerusalem

27. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel reported in May 2013 that 371,844 Palestinians constituted 39 per cent of the total population of Jerusalem. Some 79.5 per cent of residents and 85 per cent of children in East Jerusalem lived below the poverty line, the worst rate of all time. There remained a chronic shortage of more than 1,000 classrooms in East Jerusalem's education system. Palestinians were permitted to build on only 14 per cent of East Jerusalem. A third of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem had been expropriated since 1967, and thousands of settlement housing units had been built on it. Israel's building of the separation wall, the closing of passage points and the implementation of a strict "entry permit" regime had effectively cut off East Jerusalem from the West Bank, exacerbating the already dire economic and social condition of Palestinian residents. In 2012, Israel had

revoked the residency status of 116 Palestinians from Jerusalem. Since 1967, the residency status of 14,263 Palestinians had been revoked and rescinded by Israel.

Area C

28. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 150,000 Palestinians live in 542 communities in “Area C”, constituting over 60 per cent of the West Bank, where Israel retains near exclusive control under the Oslo Accords with a complex system of physical and administrative measures. Some 325,000 Israeli settlers live in some 135 settlements and about 100 outposts in Area C. Palestinian construction in 29 per cent of Area C is heavily restricted, and less than 1 per cent has been planned for Palestinian development. In addition, 5,000 Palestinians reside in 38 communities located in areas designated as “firing zones” for military training, increasing their vulnerability and risk of displacement.

The wall

29. Israel continued the illegal construction of the wall in the Occupied West Bank, including in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported in July 2013 that the wall’s total length was approximately 712 km, more than twice the length of the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line) between the West Bank and Israel. Approximately 62 per cent of the wall was complete. If completed as planned, some 85 per cent of the route would run inside the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line, isolating 9.4 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Around 11,000 Palestinians living in 32 communities located between the wall and the Green Line depend on the granting of Israeli permits or special arrangements to live in their own homes. Approximately 150 Palestinian communities have land located behind the wall, forcing residents to seek special permits or “prior coordination” with the Israeli authorities to access it.

Demolitions and displacements

30. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israel carried out the demolition of at least 594 Palestinian-owned structures during the reporting period, displacing at least 924 people (as at 30 September). There was a significant rise in demolitions and displacement in East Jerusalem, and, as of August 2013, the number of people displaced in the City in 2013 was greater than 250, more than the combined total of persons displaced in all of 2011 and 2012. The entire Bir Nabala Bedouin community in East Jerusalem was demolished in August, displacing 39 people, including 18 children, on the grounds that the residential and livelihood structures lacked building permits issued by Israel.

Security

31. On 14 November 2012, Israel launched a large-scale military offensive, “Operation Pillar of Defence”, in the Gaza Strip, with the targeted assassination of the acting chief of the military wing of Hamas. Palestinian armed groups responded by firing rockets into Israel, and the hostilities lasted until 21 November, when a ceasefire agreement was reached. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, during the eight days of hostilities, Israel targeted more than

1,500 sites throughout the Gaza Strip and 165 Palestinians were killed, of whom 99 were believed to be civilians, including 33 children and 13 women. The Gaza Ministry of Health reported that 1,399 Palestinians had been injured, the majority of whom were believed to be civilians. During the same period, Palestinian armed factions fired 1,506 rockets towards Israel, according to IDF, and six Israelis, including three civilians, were killed as a result of the rocket attacks and 224 others were injured, the vast majority of whom were reportedly civilians.

32. Overall, Israeli forces killed at least 196 Palestinians and injured more than 1,600 in the Gaza Strip during the reporting period (as at 30 September) in incidents involving air strikes and the enforcement of access restrictions near the border fence. In addition, 3 Palestinians, including 2 children, were killed and 24 Palestinians, including 19 children, were injured in incidents involving unexploded ordnance.

33. In the West Bank, Israeli occupying forces continued to conduct routine military raids and arrests. During the reporting period (as at 30 September), 20 Palestinians were killed and more than 4,200 injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including during clashes with demonstrators. Israeli forces arrested at least 3,583 Palestinians in more than 3,000 search-and-arrest operations.

34. Palestinian civilians engaged in demonstrations against the occupation continued to be killed and injured by the excessive use of force by Israel, including live ammunition and rubber-coated bullets. The Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, in a report issued in July 2013 on the routine use by the Israeli army of rubber-coated metal bullets as a means of dispersing demonstrations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, stated that since 2000, at least 19 Palestinians, including 12 minors, had been killed by such bullets. It also stated that Israeli security forces made routine use of other crowd-control weapons, such as tear gas, stun grenades, water cannons and pepper spray, in unlawful and dangerous ways, with minimal accountability to prevent the recurrence of such conduct.

Gaza Strip

35. The long-standing restrictions on the movement of people and goods to, from and within the Gaza Strip continued to undermine the living conditions of its 1.7 million Palestinian residents. According to a report released by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in July 2013, 57 per cent of Gaza households are food-insecure and about 80 per cent are aid recipients, 34.5 per cent of those able and willing to work are unemployed. A long-standing electricity deficit and shortages in fuel result in power outages of up to 12 hours per day. More than 12,000 people are currently displaced owing to their inability to reconstruct their homes that were destroyed during hostilities. Since 2007, at least 230 Palestinian civilians have been killed and over 400 injured while working in tunnels used for the transfer of restricted goods between Gaza and Egypt. During the reporting period, 15 people were killed and 20 injured in tunnel-related incidents (as of August).

36. Fewer than 200 people per day (on average) were allowed out of Gaza by way of Israel in the first half of 2013, compared with 26,000 in the equivalent period in 2000. Less than one truckload of goods per day (on average) exited Gaza in the first half of 2013, compared with 38 during the first half of 2007 (before the imposition of the blockade). Access to land within 300 m from the fence erected by Israel

surrounding Gaza is generally prohibited, and access to farming areas several hundred metres beyond is dangerous. Palestinian fishermen are allowed to access less than one third of the fishing areas allocated to them under the Oslo Accords (6 of 20 nautical miles) and are denied access to the most profitable fishing areas off the Gaza coast. The livelihoods of thousands of families have been impacted by the access restrictions: from 2000 to 2013, the number of fishermen declined from around 10,000 to only 3,500, some 95 per cent of whom rely on international aid.

Water

37. Israel, the occupying Power, retains almost exclusive control over all underground and surface water resources, the construction of new wells and cisterns and the upgrading of existing wells and other water infrastructure in the West Bank. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 1 million Palestinians in 492 communities in the West Bank access or consume 60 litres of water per capita per day or less, significantly below the World Health Organization recommendation of 100 litres per capita per day. In addition, an estimated 313,000 Palestinians from 113 communities are not connected to a water network, which translates into enormous costs related to water purchase. Israeli settlers in the West Bank consume approximately six times the water consumed by Palestinians. In some cases, the discrepancies are even wider: the Dead Sea settlements of “Mitzpe Shalem” and “Qalya” consume approximately 700 litres per capita per day, while the neighbouring Palestinian village of Al-Jiftlik has access to only 66 litres per capita per day and the Palestinian villages of Al-Nuweï’ma and Al-Hadidiya are at humanitarian crisis levels with 24 and 22 litres per capita per day, respectively.

38. In Gaza, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, only a quarter of households receive running water every day, but only during several hours, and over 90 per cent of the water extracted from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption. Some 90 million litres of untreated and partially treated sewage are dumped in the sea off the Gaza coast each day, creating public health hazards.

Women and children

39. In March 2013, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that, despite a rise in female participation in the labour force over the past 10 years, the participation rate remained low at 17.4 per cent in 2012, compared with 10.3 per cent in 2001. The female unemployment rate increased to 32.9 per cent in 2012 compared with 13.8 per cent in 2001. In 2012 in the West Bank, 20.7 per cent of local council members were female and 40.6 per cent of public sector employees were female.

40. In a report issued in March 2013, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) stated that the ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appeared to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized. The pattern of ill-treatment includes the arrests of children at their homes between midnight and 5 a.m. by heavily armed soldiers; the practice of blindfolding children and tying their hands with plastic ties; physical and verbal abuse during transfer to an interrogation site, including the use of painful restraints; the lack of access to water, food, toilet facilities and medical care; interrogation using physical violence

and threats; coerced confessions; and the lack of access to lawyers or family members during interrogation. Treatment inconsistent with child rights continues during court appearances, including the shackling of children; the denial of bail and imposition of custodial sentences; and the transfer of children outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory to serve their sentences inside Israel. The incarceration isolates them from their families and interrupts their studies. UNICEF stated that these practices were in violation of international law that protects all children against ill-treatment when in contact with law enforcement, military and judicial institutions.

Prisoners

41. The Committee continued to monitor with serious concern the conditions of the Palestinian prisoners held by Israel in jails and detention centres in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel. On 22 February, a 30-year-old Palestinian gas station attendant, Arafat Jaradat, died while undergoing interrogation in an Israeli facility, days after his arrest by IDF. The Palestinian Ministry for Prisoners' Affairs reported that he had been tortured savagely and subjected to psychological pressure on suspicion that he had thrown stones at Israeli troops. Israeli officials claimed that he had died of cardiac arrest. The United Nations called for an international, independent investigation into his death, but that has not been implemented.

42. The Palestinian organization Addameer reported in June 2013 that, since 1967, 73 Palestinian detainees had died from torture at the hands of Israeli interrogators. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at the end of July 2013, 4,828 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners were being held in Israeli prisons, including 134 administrative detainees, 193 minors and 11 women.

43. On 28 July, the Israeli Cabinet, with a view to facilitating the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks, voted to approve the release of 104 Palestinian prisoners who had been held for more than 20 years. On 14 August, Israel released 26 of the prisoners, hours before the first round of formal peace talks were held in Jerusalem.

Palestinian State-building

44. On 20 October 2012, the first municipal elections since 2005 were successfully held in the West Bank. Elections in the Gaza Strip did not take place, since Hamas authorities did not allow the Central Elections Commission to carry out voter registration and related electoral preparations. In February, Hamas allowed the Commission to conduct registration in Gaza for eventual national elections, but Israel banned the transfer of registration forms from Gaza to Ramallah. The Commission used scanners to digitally transfer the data, and the Head of the Commission handed the updated voter register to President Abbas on 12 April and informed him that the Commission was technically ready to organize any election once it was so decided. On 6 June, following the resignation of the Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, a new Palestinian Cabinet was sworn in under the leadership of the newly appointed Prime Minister, Rami Hamdallah, to carry on the administration of the State's affairs until a national consensus government was formed. Meanwhile, a series of reconciliation meetings between Fatah and Hamas, mediated by Egypt, did not yield tangible results.

45. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported in September 2013 that, with the persistence of Israeli restrictions on mobility in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, gross domestic product had

decelerated and poverty and unemployment had increased in 2012. The Palestinian fiscal crisis had deepened, owing to less aid and the withholding of Palestinian revenue by Israel. The crisis was exacerbated by the leakage of Palestinian fiscal revenues from smuggling and lost tax on imports from Israel, estimated at \$300 million annually.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

46. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continued to provide extensive services and emergency assistance to the Palestine refugees in all its fields of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Agency continued to experience a grave and recurrent financial crisis, which threatened its ability to sustain its services, continue its emergency assistance programmes and complete essential projects, such as the reconstruction of the Nahr El Bared camp in Lebanon. In the light of the escalating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Agency is particularly concerned about the more than 500,000 Palestine refugees who have lived in the Syrian Arab Republic for decades. As of July 2013, more than two thirds of the community had been displaced, with approximately 235,000 persons displaced inside the Syrian Arab Republic, 92,000 displaced persons in Lebanon and over 8,000 displaced persons in Jordan. As the conflict has become increasingly violent and indiscriminate, it has exacted a heavy toll on Palestine refugees, with most of the 12 Palestine refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic being severely affected.

47. While the Government of Israel undertook some measures to ease the movement of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip, the blockade persisted and those measures fell well short of the level required to meet the needs of the Palestine refugee population and the Agency's reconstruction requirements, or to ensure the revival of the economy which would reduce the dependency on UNRWA services. The Committee again expresses its appreciation for the dedication of UNRWA and its entire staff to its mission and calls upon all donors to increase contributions, particularly in the light of prevailing crises and needs, to ensure the continuity of needed services and the well-being of approximately 5 million registered Palestine refugees under the mandate of the Agency.

United Nations Development Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

48. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, continued to respond to the development needs in the State of Palestine. In support of the Palestinian Authority's National Development Plan and Statehood Agenda, UNDP proceeded with the implementation of its consolidated plan, "Development for Freedom: Empowered Lives, a Resilient Nation 2012-2014". The three-year plan focuses on democratic governance and the rule of law, economic empowerment and private sector investment, environment and management of natural resources, as well as public and social infrastructure. In support of Palestinian statehood, the UNDP plan places empowerment, resilience and sustainability at the centre of its operation and focuses on three priority areas: the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Area C, where the needs are the greatest.

49. The Committee also remained appreciative of the important work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It noted that the consolidated appeal for 2013 focused on delivering humanitarian assistance, increased protection of civilians, enhanced monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian situation and the strengthening of United Nations humanitarian coordination structures.

Chapter V

Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution [67/20](#)

1. Action taken in the Security Council

50. During the reporting period, the Security Council continued to monitor the situation on the ground and the efforts to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. It held monthly briefings throughout the year under the agenda item entitled “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”.

51. During the open debates at the Council held on 15 October 2012, 23 January, 24 April and 23 July 2013, the Chair of the Committee delivered statements (see [S/PV.6847](#), Resumption 1; [S/PV.6906](#), Resumption 1; [S/PV.6950](#), Resumption 1; [S/PV.7007](#)).

2. Action taken by the Bureau of the Committee

52. On 16 November 2012, the Bureau of the Committee issued a statement on the deadly military attacks by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Gaza Strip (GA/PAL/1247). On 6 December, the Bureau issued a statement on Israel’s illegal settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (GA/PAL/1252). Furthermore, on 16 April 2013, the Bureau issued a statement on the plight of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel (GA/PAL/1263).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions [67/20](#) and [67/21](#)

1. Committee meetings at Headquarters

53. At its periodic meetings at Headquarters in New York, the Committee, among other things, was briefed on recent developments by the Chief Palestinian Negotiator, Saeb Erakat, and organized a screening of a documentary film on the life of the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Also, the Committee was briefed by members of the jury of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine on the outcome of its session held in New York in October 2012.

2. Committee meeting outside Headquarters

54. At the invitation of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Committee convened a special meeting in Caracas on 17 and 18 April 2013 to discuss the implications of General Assembly resolution [67/19](#) and initiatives to promote worldwide and regional solidarity with the Palestinian people. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Committee, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Riad Al Malki, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Elías Jaua Milano. The meeting adopted a declaration and a comprehensive programme of action in support of the Palestinian people and their rights and legitimate national aspirations.

3. Programme of international meetings and conferences

55. In the period under review, the following international events were held under the auspices of the Committee in 2013:

(a) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, FAO headquarters, Rome, 27 and 28 February, on the challenges and opportunities in the new reality of a State under occupation;

(b) United Nations Meeting of Consultations with Civil Society Organizations active on the Question of Palestine, FAO headquarters, Rome, 1 March;

(c) United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, 29 and 30 April, on African solidarity with the Palestinian people;

(d) United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Beijing, 18 and 19 June, on collective international engagement towards a two-State solution.

56. The above-mentioned events were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations system entities, as well as parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and the media. Detailed information about the meetings is being issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and available on the "Question of Palestine" website maintained by the Division.

57. In connection with the above-mentioned events, the Committee delegation held meetings with senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy on the margins of the seminar held in Rome. In Beijing, the Committee delegation met with high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, and the Middle East Envoy, Wu Sike.

4. Cooperation with intergovernmental organizations

58. Throughout the year, the Committee continued its cooperation with the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Committee is appreciative of the active participation of their representatives in the various international events held under its auspices.

5. Cooperation with civil society

Civil society organizations

59. The Committee continued its cooperation with civil society organizations worldwide. Representatives of civil society participated in all meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee, including the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2012. The meetings provided civil society representatives with an opportunity to discuss the situation on the ground and their programmes in support of the Palestinian people and to further advance the coordination of their activities. The Committee was appreciative of the work done by civil society organizations and encouraged them to continue contributing to efforts aimed at realizing a two-State solution.

60. The Committee has reactivated its Working Group and mandated it to implement the Committee's programme of cooperation with civil society. The Chair of the Working Group is the representative of Malta.

61. During the reporting period, eight civil society organizations were accredited to the Committee.

62. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintained a civil society page (<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/ngo.htm>) on the "Question of Palestine" website as a tool for the exchange of information and networking and for cooperation between civil society and the Committee.

63. The Division maintained a Facebook page to disseminate information about the work of the Committee, and the United Nations as a whole, on the question of Palestine. In addition, the Division continued to publish the periodic online bulletin *NGO Action News*, reaching out to more than 1,000 civil society organizations around the world, in order to catalogue and publicize civil society initiatives.

Parliaments and interparliamentary organizations

64. The Committee continued to attach great importance to developing its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Representatives of parliaments and interparliamentary organizations participated in international events organized by the Committee during 2013. In particular, three Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, one Member of the Israeli Knesset and a former Knesset Member participated as speakers in the international meeting held in Beijing.

6. Research, monitoring and publications

65. The Division carried out research and monitoring activities and responded to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine. Under the guidance of the Committee, which reiterated the relevance of the research, monitoring and publications programme, it also prepared the publications listed below for dissemination, including through the Internet:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of international meetings and conferences organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletin and information notes on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Periodic reviews of developments related to the Middle East peace process;

(f) Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

7. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

66. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to administer, maintain, expand and develop the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and the “Question of Palestine” website. That included the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the technical components of the system to ensure the uninterrupted presence of UNISPAL (<http://unispal.un.org>) on the Internet and involved the expansion of the document collection to include relevant new and old United Nations and related documents. In addition, steps continued to be taken to enhance the user-friendliness and usefulness of UNISPAL, by creating a focus page on the status of Palestine at the United Nations in the light of its admission as a non-member observer State, continuing to provide titles to documents in French and incorporating additional multimedia content. RSS and Twitter feeds continued to alert users about newly posted materials.

8. Training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine

67. The Division conducted the annual training programme for staff of the Government of the State of Palestine. Two staff members of the Ministry of National Economy participated in a three-week training programme at the United Nations Office at Geneva during the sixtieth session of the Trade and Development Board, from 16 September to 4 October 2013, where they familiarized themselves with the work of UNCTAD, including on trade facilitation and foreign direct investment. They also attended briefings on the work of other United Nations entities, including the Human Rights Council, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization. In addition, two staff members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are in the process of completing a three-month training programme at United Nations Headquarters in New York held from 11 September to 27 November 2013, in order to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the work of the Secretariat and other United Nations organs and bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

9. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

68. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 2012 at Headquarters in New York and the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. At Headquarters, in addition to a special meeting of the Committee, an art exhibit entitled “Palestine: memories, dreams, perseverance” was organized under the auspices of the Committee, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day of Solidarity had also been observed by United Nations information centres and other bodies in many cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/22

69. The Department of Public Information, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/22, continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine. In doing so, it strove to enhance dialogue and understanding, while sensitizing public opinion to the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process.

70. To mark the 2012 observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, the Department widely disseminated the Secretary-General's message in the six official languages, while the United Nations information centres in several cities translated the message into the local languages and posted it on their social media accounts. Commemorative events and activities were organized at United Nations information centres around the world, with the support of the Department.

71. The Department's annual training programme for Palestinian journalists held at United Nations Headquarters from 5 November to 7 December 2012 focused, for the first time, on online journalism and digital media. Four male and four female journalists were selected to attend from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The group was briefed by senior United Nations officials and attended meetings of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee). They also met with leaders of the digital media industry from Google, Twitter, Tumblr, the *Huffington Post*, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Al Jazeera and Reuters, among others.

72. The Department also used all of its information outlets and products, including digital media platforms, to highlight the broad range of developments and issues related to the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process. The multilingual United Nations News Centre portal covered the subject extensively, with its English and French language versions carrying more than 200 related stories and the Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish versions providing further coverage. The Department also produced 108 press releases on the question of Palestine in English and French, which included summaries of formal meetings and press conferences, as well as statements by the Secretary-General and other United Nations officials.

73. Reporting on the work of alleviating the plight of Palestinians carried out by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, UNRWA and other United Nations entities was also part of the extensive coverage provided by United Nations Radio in the six official languages of the United Nations and other languages.

74. Live television feeds from meetings at the United Nations, and news and feature programmes produced by United Nations Television and Video, were distributed by a variety of means and platforms, including the UNifeed satellite distribution system, *United Nations Webcast* and the United Nations channel on the Time Warner cable network in the New York City area. UNifeed packaged more than 20 Palestine-related stories during the reporting period for broadcasters around

the world, including reports from the field by UNRWA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, and coverage of statements and activities by senior United Nations officials.

75. United Nations Photo staff covered related events at Headquarters and in the field, including the visit by the Secretary-General to the West Bank on 21 November 2012, the General Assembly vote on the status of Palestine and the daily life of Palestinians, especially children and youth.

76. The Guided Tours Unit maintained a revised tour route at Headquarters, which includes a stop at the permanent exhibit entitled “The question of Palestine and the United Nations”. During the reporting period, approximately 148,000 visitors took the guided tour. In addition, a total of 341 persons from seven groups of scholars, students and officials were briefed on the question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process. The United Nations public inquiries team responded to 55 queries relating to the Middle East peace process.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

77. The Committee remains firmly convinced that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects and an end to the Israeli occupation remain central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and merit the close attention of the international community. To that end, the Committee concentrated its efforts on promoting international awareness of the issue, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Committee urged the international community to step up its engagement for the resumption of final status negotiations, within a clear framework based on internationally recognized parameters; promoted international action against obstacles in their path, such as the illegal Israeli settlement enterprise; encouraged solidarity with the Palestinians and their State; and engaged with diverse constituencies in support of peace. In its programme of work, the Committee analysed the ramifications of the new reality of a State under occupation. It actively sought to incorporate lessons learned from the history of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles of other countries, in particular in Africa. It continued to mobilize international support for the Palestinian State-building programme, while highlighting the massive economic costs of the Israeli occupation. It urged increased donor support for the agencies of the United Nations system, in particular UNRWA, providing vital humanitarian support for the Palestinian people.

78. The Committee welcomed the admission of Palestine as a non-member observer State by the General Assembly, while calling upon all Member States to extend full diplomatic recognition to it. The Committee is of the view that the vote in the General Assembly constituted an important step towards the realization of the two-State solution, gave a new urgency to the resumption of the peace process, and vested the State of Palestine with important additional rights to join international legal frameworks and to contribute to the work of the United Nations system as a whole. The Committee stands ready to support Palestinian initiatives in this regard at the appropriate time. The Security Council should revisit the issue of the full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations in the light of the General Assembly vote.

79. The Committee condemned the illegal retaliatory measures undertaken by Israel following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution [67/19](#), including the withholding of Palestinian revenues and the acceleration of the settlement campaign, which raised tensions on the ground and jeopardized Palestinian institutional and socioeconomic development. The Committee calls upon the donors to institute a financial safety net to prevent future damage to Palestinian institutions, the development of which donors have generously supported over the years. The Committee condemned other illegal measures by Israel, the occupying Power, such as the construction of the separation wall, the use of excessive force against Palestinian protesters, arrest raids, prisoner abuse, the continuation of the Gaza blockade and hundreds of checkpoints throughout the West Bank and measures that stymie development and cause the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, particularly from East

Jerusalem and Area C. The Committee raised international awareness of the abusive practices experienced by the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, including by prisoners undertaking hunger strikes, minors and those held without trial, and called for their prompt release and reintegration into Palestinian society.

80. The Committee remained deeply troubled by repeated bouts of violence. It condemned all attacks against civilians, in particular the military operation launched by Israel against Gaza in November 2012, the rocket fire from Gaza against Israeli civilian targets, settler violence, and the killings of unarmed protesters by Israeli forces. It calls upon the parties to adhere to the terms of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. It further calls upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to act urgently to uphold international humanitarian law and guarantee the protection of civilians.

81. The Committee welcomes the vigorous international diplomacy by the United States, the Arab League, the Secretary-General and many world leaders, which laid the basis for the resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Committee salutes the demonstrated commitment of the Palestinian leadership to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which should be reciprocated by the Israeli side. The Committee is looking forward to serious negotiations on the basis of pre-1967 borders which resolve all outstanding issues within the envisaged time frame, leading to the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the independence of a truly sovereign, contiguous, viable and democratic State of Palestine. Sustained engagement and support by the international community, including a revitalized Quartet, is vital to ensure that the parties negotiate in good faith, live up to their commitments, and refrain from steps that jeopardize negotiations. Stepped-up international assistance and a tangible rollback of the measures of occupation are required to build popular support for negotiations. The current diplomatic initiative may represent the final window of opportunity to achieve a negotiated two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. The Committee is concerned in this regard by continued Israeli settlement announcements that threaten to derail negotiations. The Committee also stresses the importance of Palestinian unity under the legitimate leadership of President Abbas to secure a comprehensive peace.

82. The Committee welcomed the findings and recommendations of the international fact-finding mission on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which highlighted the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular in respect of settlements. It further welcomes in this regard the recently adopted European Union guidelines that prohibit funding by European Union institutions for Israeli entities connected with the settlements, as an overdue first step towards fulfilling obligations under international law. This measure should be followed up by further international action against settlements.

83. The Committee has consistently supported the Palestinian State-building and reform agenda. It is concerned that the accomplishments are now endangered owing to the chronic financial crisis and calls upon donors to meet their prior commitments and to provide additional aid to avert further deterioration. The Committee remains convinced, however, that sustainable economic development cannot take root under the existing regime of Israeli occupation.

84. The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights will continue through their mandated activities to generate heightened international awareness of the question of Palestine, as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful and constructive contribution of the Division in support of its mandate. It notes with satisfaction: (a) the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the programme's objectives, as evidenced by the number of adopted resolutions, international meetings and conferences, commemorations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and increased membership of the Committee; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the number of civil society conferences, public forums, meetings and consultations between the Committee and civil society organizations; and (c) an increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the increased number of visits to the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and other information materials on the "Question of Palestine" website. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, carried out annually by the Division, has proved its usefulness, as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further enhanced.

85. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2014, to be implemented by the Division, on widening international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The programme will also focus on the creation of a favourable atmosphere for the success of the resumed permanent status negotiations. The Committee intends to mobilize increased international scrutiny of the developments on the ground, in particular settlement activities, and will emphasize responsibility and promote action by the international community to put an end to all illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee will examine the legal ramifications of the new international status of the State of Palestine, and will also continue to call attention to the plight of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails and urge a resolution of their plight.

86. The Committee will analyse lessons learned and the feedback received from participants in its events and adjust their format and substance, as appropriate. It will strive to involve prominent international personalities and

experts and the representatives of vulnerable populations, such as women and refugees, in its events, while giving due regard to gender balance.

87. The Committee will continue to enrich the format of its regular meetings. It will invite internationally renowned personalities to brief the Committee and the wider United Nations membership. The Committee also considers that the round-table meetings have proved particularly useful in generating practical proposals for action in the United Nations and beyond and will continue to utilize this format.

88. The Committee will continue to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to support and enhance the viability of the State of Palestine. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just solution to all permanent status issues, including the question of refugees, based on principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III). The Committee wishes to contribute to efforts towards ending incitement on both sides, as well as to promote peace education. It will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth and their organizations. The Committee also wishes to promote Palestinian reconciliation.

89. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people. A comprehensive peace will take root only if the relevant civil societies strongly demand it of their political leaderships. Special efforts are needed to revitalize the peace camp in Israel. The Committee lauds the courageous advocacy actions of countless activists, including eminent personalities and parliamentarians, who participate in demonstrations against the wall, try to break the siege of Gaza and keep their home constituencies informed about the harsh realities of life under occupation. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine. The Committee believes that the recommendations it adopted during the reporting period and its reactivated Working Group will help in building stronger partnerships with civil society. The Committee appreciates the support it receives from the Secretariat in this regard. The Committee encourages its members and observers to mobilize their respective civil societies at the national level, in particular the youth, and to establish solidarity committees with the State of Palestine.

90. The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of the two-State solution and uphold their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

91. The Committee will reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership. It will actively work to organize more thematic debates on the question of Palestine in various United Nations forums. The Committee intends to request that the General Assembly proclaim an International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Committee

believes that its increased workload should be adequately supported by an expanded Bureau.

92. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, in support of the Committee's communication strategy. The Division should pay special attention to continued development of the "Question of Palestine" portal, including the addition of a mobile-device-friendly version, and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It should also continue to develop the UNISPAL document collection by reflecting current issues and events, as well as by continuing to digitize and upload historical documents and to add user-friendly search features. The Division should continue to collaborate with the United Nations Libraries at Headquarters and at Geneva in the search for historic documents. It should further enhance the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, paying special attention to the programme's gender balance, and optimize the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. Voluntary contributions from members and observers in line with their capacity are to be encouraged to put the programme on a solid financial footing. The Committee also commends its members and observers which instituted training programmes at the national level to build Palestinian capacity.

93. The Division should continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

94. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

95. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

