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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF
THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF
THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1996

I. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE
INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for 1996 is contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/84 A, B and C of 15 December 1995, the relevant parts of which are paragraphs 2 to 6 of resolution 50/84 A, paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 50/84 B, and paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 50/84 C.

2. In paragraphs 2 to 4 of resolution 50/84 A, the General Assembly considered that the Committee could continue to make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements 1/ and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period; endorsed the Committee's recommendations; 2/ and requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate.

3. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the General Assembly authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session and thereafter.

4. In paragraph 6 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and promoting



support and assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, and to take the necessary steps to involve additional NGOs in its work.

5. Resolution 50/84 B deals with the work programme of the Division for Palestinian Rights. In paragraph 2, the General Assembly considered that the Division for Palestinian Rights continued to make a useful and constructive contribution through the organization of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, as well as through its research and monitoring activities, the preparation of studies and publications, and the collection and dissemination of information in printed and electronic form on all issues pertaining to the question of Palestine. In paragraph 3, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources, including the further development of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), and to ensure that it continued to discharge the tasks detailed in the pertinent General Assembly resolutions in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance.

6. Resolution 50/84 C deals with the programme of work of the Department of Public Information. In paragraph 2, the General Assembly considered that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information was very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general, including the achievements of the peace process, and that the programme was contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. In paragraph 3, it requested the Department of Public Information, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as might be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1996-1997, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

II. PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 1996

7. In the recommendations contained in its report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, 2/ the Committee welcomed further positive developments in the peace process and expressed its commitment to continue to intensify its support for the Palestinian people and its leadership during the transition process.

8. The Committee reaffirmed that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the

Committee's role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period and until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

9. While remaining firm on this position of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work in order to respond to the new realities on the ground and to make a concrete contribution to the attainment of a just peace in the Middle East.

10. In 1996, in accordance with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, the Committee will continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties; and will mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. The Committee will continue to cooperate with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and organizations of the United Nations system in carrying out its mandate.

11. In order to enhance its effectiveness and achieve optimal utilization of available resources, keeping in mind the financial crisis of the Organization, the Committee will make some additional adjustments in its programme of work, as indicated below.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE AND THE DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

A. Action by the Committee

12. The Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, requiring international action. The Committee, through its Chairman, will continue to participate in relevant meetings of intergovernmental bodies, as considered necessary.

13. The Committee will seek to expand its contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including NGOs, in the areas under its jurisdiction. In particular, the Committee will invite officials from the Authority and other Palestinian personalities to special meetings of the Committee in order to apprise its members and other delegations of the important developments on the ground and the evolving needs of the Palestinian people to be met through international action. The Committee will consider ways and means of developing cooperation with and assistance to Palestinian NGOs, including participation in their meetings by the Committee or the staff of the Division.

14. The Committee also requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to explore, in cooperation with the competent offices of the United Nations Secretariat, the possibility of accommodating three young Palestinian professionals, from the areas under the Palestinian Authority, as interns in the Division with a view to acquiring better knowledge and understanding of the work and objectives of the

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United Nations. To achieve maximum effectiveness, the Committee requests that the internship be scheduled for a period of four months, in conjunction with the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

15. The Committee is of the view that some of the resources authorized by the General Assembly for the Committee's programme of work can be usefully redeployed towards the above-mentioned activities, within the context of adjustments to its programme, in accordance with the authorization given to the Committee in paragraph 5 of resolution 50/84 A.

16. The Committee is of the view that seminars and NGO meetings convened under its auspices continue to be a useful mechanism for in-depth consideration of the priority issues and intends to refocus and streamline this programme for maximum usefulness, including the possibility of co-sponsoring those meetings with academic institutions, NGOs and others. The Committee will also give consideration to holding an event in the territory under the Palestinian Authority to address aspects of the transition period.

B. Seminars and NGO meetings

17. Provision was made in the current programme budget for seven regional seminars, seven regional NGO symposia, two international NGO meetings and four preparatory NGO meetings to be held during 1996-1997. The Committee has decided to adjust this programme by holding two meetings of consultations with NGOs during the biennium (instead of four preparatory meetings), by combining seminars, symposia and NGO meetings as far as possible and by adjusting their periodicity. It is expected that this streamlining will help sharpen the focus and increase the usefulness of these meetings while reducing overall expenditure. The Committee will also endeavour, in cooperation with prospective host countries and institutions and the competent Secretariat services, to limit costs for conference facilities, equipment and servicing staff, while still ensuring the success of the meetings.

18. Accordingly, the Committee decided to hold the following meetings in the course of 1996:

- Consultations with representatives of NGO coordinating committees, 1 and 2 February, United Nations Headquarters;
- North American NGO symposium, 24-26 June, United Nations Headquarters;
- Seminar on assistance and economic development, May, Cairo;
- International NGO meeting and European NGO symposium, September (territory under the Palestinian Authority).

19. With regard to the North American seminar which had been held in the past in conjunction with the respective NGO symposium, the Committee decided not to hold this event and to redeploy some of the resources towards enhancing the symposium.

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20. The Committee also decided to hold a combined seminar/NGO symposium in the Asian region and to initiate consultations with prospective host countries with a view to beginning preparations for this event.

C. Research, monitoring and publications, including the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

21. The Committee continues to attach great importance to the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine, and requests it to continue its programme of publications and the further development of UNISPAL, in consultation with the Committee. The Committee also requests the Division to consider preparing information kits on particular issues, in consultation with the Bureau.

22. In accordance with existing mandates and earlier requests of the Committee, the Division's publications programme in 1996 will include the following:

(a) The monthly bulletin on activities by the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and others on the question of Palestine, containing the texts of all relevant resolutions, statements and decisions;

(b) The periodic bulletin entitled Developments related to the Middle East Peace Process, containing information on the peace process and the multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues;

(c) The monthly chronological summary of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on press reports and other sources.

23. In addition, the Committee requests the Division, in cooperation with the active coordinating committees of NGOs, to prepare periodically a flyer containing information on significant NGO activities for the information of the Committee and for communication to the NGO network.

24. The Division will also issue the reports of regional and international meetings, organized under the auspices of the Committee; a special bulletin on the commemoration, in 1995, of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; and a compilation of relevant resolutions, decisions and statements adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in 1995. The Division will further update, as needed, its information notes on the work of the Committee and the Division, on the NGO programme of the Committee and on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

25. With regard to the preparation of studies on fundamental issues, requested by the Committee, it is noted with appreciation that the Division has completed the draft study on Jerusalem, updating and expanding an earlier study issued in 1981. The Division will also continue its work on a draft of the study on Israeli settlements.

26. With regard to UNISPAL, the Committee notes with appreciation that the Division has completed the initial stages of development of the system, with the acquisition of the necessary hardware and software, the establishment of a bulletin board system (BBS), the introduction of Lotus Notes, and the inclusion in the system of a comprehensive collection of current United Nations documents, as well as some other documentation. The Committee also notes the establishment of a database of accredited NGOs and the various other initiatives of the Division in making full use of this electronic facility in its monitoring, research and other activities. While pleased with these developments, the Committee notes that the initial mandate for UNISPAL was given by the General Assembly in 1991 and that it is now urgent to proceed with the full and effective implementation of the system.

27. The Committee notes, in particular, that because of the long history of the question of Palestine, the vast majority of important documents to be included in UNISPAL predate the electronic era and therefore need to be converted into a suitable electronic format. The Division has estimated that at least 25,000 pages of such documents will need to be so converted in order to cover the most important aspects of the issue. The Committee also notes that optical scanning, editing and formatting of documents is a very labour-intensive, time-consuming and highly technical exercise and that the staff of the Division is already involved full time in carrying out the various aspects of its programme of work, as well as the work needed for identifying and photocopying documents for electronic conversion, so that this additional task cannot be performed by the Division efficiently. The Committee accordingly considers that it would be more cost-effective and efficient for the Organization to contract this work on the outside and requests the Secretary-General to authorize the necessary expenditure in this regard by utilizing sections of the Division's budget specifically earmarked for UNISPAL and publications. In this respect, the Committee notes that it will not request translation of publications into languages other than the official languages of the United Nations, nor the services of consultants, and that therefore those resources could be redeployed towards the UNISPAL scanning project.

28. The Committee also recalls that one of the main purposes of UNISPAL was to provide information for the use of members of the Committee, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and others active on the question of Palestine. Noting that United Nations security regulations barring access to the local area network (LAN) by outsiders negate this intent, the Committee requests the Division to urgently develop modalities for ensuring access by permanent missions and other outside users to UNISPAL, such as by establishing a public-access replica separate from UNISPAL, and through a site on the Internet, similar to those already established by various United Nations entities.

D. International Day of Solidarity with the
Palestinian People

29. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Friday, 29 November 1996. It is envisaged that the observance will take

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place at Headquarters, at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, and elsewhere in accordance with established practice.

30. The Committee has decided, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, to prepare a special programme for the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1996, including an exhibit to be displayed at United Nations Headquarters during the week of 29 November to 6 December 1996, as well as hosting a reception and organizing other activities as appropriate.

Notes

1/ A/48/486-S/26560, annex.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/50/35), paras. 115-124.
