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

Summary record of the 346th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 19 November 2012, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Diallo (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair**, summarizing activities and developments that had taken place since the Committee's previous meeting, said that the Committee had been monitoring the recent large-scale Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip with serious concern. According to media reports, 94 Palestinians had been killed, including 50 civilians and many children. Three Israeli civilians had been killed as a result of rocket fire from Gaza, which had intensified after Israel's assassination of a Hamas leader on 14 November. On 16 November, the Bureau of the Committee had adopted a statement, which was subsequently issued as a press release, condemning all attacks perpetrated by both the Israelis and Palestinians.

3. In his capacity as Chair of the Committee, he had made a statement to the Security Council during the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, on 15 October and, on 24 October, he had held a fruitful exchange of views with China's Special Envoy to the Middle East, Mr. Wu Sike.

4. On 18 October, Israel had granted final approval to a plan to build 797 homes near the Gilo settlement in East Jerusalem and had invited tenders for the construction of 607 homes in the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement and 92 in Ma'ale Adumim in Occupied East Jerusalem, while on 6 November, the Israeli Ministry of Housing had published tenders for the construction of 1,285 new settlement units in the Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramot and Ariel settlements.

5. Municipal elections had been successfully conducted across the West Bank on 20 October. On 25 October, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 had submitted to the Third Committee a report in which he had called for a boycott of businesses that profited from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory until their operations were brought into line with international human rights and humanitarian law.

6. On 7 November, Palestine had circulated a draft resolution, to be submitted to the General Assembly on 29 November, in which Member States called for Palestine to be accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations.

7. Lastly, Israel had launched a series of air strikes in Gaza and killed the commander of Hamas' military wing on 14 November, marking the beginning of an operation codenamed "Pillar of Defence".

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

8. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that letters had been sent to the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General documenting Israeli crimes in the Gaza Strip and it had been hoped that the Security Council would issue a call for an immediate end to all military activities, as it had done in December 2008. However, owing to the influence of one major Power, no such statement had been issued. The Foreign Ministers of Arab League countries had met on 17 November in Cairo and had expressed their disappointment at the Security Council's failure to shoulder its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. The Ambassadors of the League of Arab States countries would continue to work with the President of the Security Council to lobby Security Council members to take action, particularly in the light of the escalating violence and the mobilization of Israeli tanks and troops. He commended the Secretary-General for his efforts to end Israeli aggression, including his recent trip to the region and meeting with representatives of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah. President Abbas had reaffirmed that any attack on any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was considered to be an act of aggression against all Palestinians, not just one particular group or political party, and had called for a summit of Arab leaders to agree on a plan to end the situation. The Committee would be kept abreast of the situation and he urged all Member States to take whatever steps they considered appropriate to support the Palestinian people.

9. The situation in Gaza was, in part, an effort to divert attention away from the draft resolution to change the status of Palestine that his delegation had circulated to Member States. However, nothing would stop the submission of the resolution to the General

Assembly. Ambassadors from the States members of the League of Arab States had met with all the major groups and would ask all Member States to co-sponsor the resolution, which would be submitted to the General Assembly on 29 November to coincide with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It was hoped that a majority of States, if not all, would take the momentous step of endorsing the resolution, thus demonstrating the international community's support for Palestine.

10. **Mr. Wright** (Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees Representative Office in New York) said that there had been many developments in the region, none of them positive, since his last briefing to the Committee. As the annual Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/67/13) had been submitted to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly on 6 November 2012, he would focus on the critical short-term needs of the Agency and the extremely worrying situation in Gaza. Two-thirds of the population of Gaza, some 1.2 million people, were Palestine refugees, many of them living in the Agency's eight refugee camps. The operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza represented a large proportion of its overall activities, involving 12,000 UNRWA staff members, 21 health centres and 245 schools. One week into the current conflict, the Agency's work had been adversely affected: a teacher had been killed and many children and refugees injured; schools had been closed until further notice; and six schools, four medical centres, one distribution centre and two other UNRWA installations had been damaged. Shops in Gaza were also closed, waste was accumulating and the fuel shortages had been exacerbated by the closure of the tunnels. UNRWA had opened its first centre for 250 displaced persons and would need \$12.7 million to deal with the current crisis, including \$6 million for food aid for some 800,000 refugees; \$2 million for cash assistance; \$1 million for non-food items; \$1.5 million to repair UNRWA shelters and facilities; \$400,000 to replenish medical stocks; and \$1.5 million to pay for fuel. As the total would vary considerably as the situation evolved, he appealed to all those who were in a position to help to make a donation.

11. In addition to the Gaza crisis, there were currently 518,000 Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic. While the Syrian Government had been a generous host to those refugees for decades and continued to facilitate UNRWA activities, the escalating conflict in that country had had detrimental consequences on the refugees' well-being; many had been killed as a result of the conflict, which had also claimed the lives of five UNRWA staff members. It was therefore becoming increasingly problematic to carry out operations in that country and many Palestine refugees faced being displaced once more. UNRWA facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic were currently hosting some 2,000 internally displaced persons, mainly Syrians. The Agency was providing some 400,000 people with cash, food and non-food items. Without further donations, the cash assistance funds would be depleted by January 2013. UNRWA would require funding amounting to \$54 million for its activities in the context of the United Nations consolidated Syria Regional Response Plan. Some \$18 million had been received thus far, but additional support would be needed in the coming months.

12. A significant number of refugees in the West Bank also relied on UNRWA assistance, as a result of Israeli settlement expansion and the forced displacement of Palestinians. Efforts to meet their basic needs were funded by the emergency appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but only 40 per cent of the target amount for 2011 had been raised, and a similar outcome was foreseen for 2012, despite the lowering of the target to \$300 million. He urged donors to support the 2013 appeal, which would be scaled down still further and would focus on protection and relief efforts.

13. The influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic to Lebanon had led UNRWA to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared camp that had been destroyed in 2007. Half of the funding for that project had been collected so far, but additional donations, amounting to some \$4 million, would be needed to cover rental subsidies and hospitalization costs for refugees who were waiting to return to the camp. Unfortunately, the general fund that was used to finance core UNRWA activities had a shortfall of \$21.3 million for 2012. UNRWA was working very hard to overcome that deficit, however, the Agency's financial situation was critical and he appealed for donations so that the Agency would be able pay its staff and continue to

provide vital services to the 5.1 million Palestine refugees in the region. In the light of the multiple crises UNRWA faced, it was essential that Member States not only provided financial support, but also advocated and lobbied on behalf of the Agency.

14. **The Chair** said he was confident that the Agency's call for additional resources would meet with a positive response in the coming weeks.

15. **Mr. Raad** (Observer for Lebanon) said that only six days of Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip had left dozens of innocent victims, many of whose families had fled to the area after being expelled from their homes in 1948. The Israeli Minister of the Interior had openly urged the Israeli Defense Forces to send Gaza back to the Middle Ages. The Arab-Israeli conflict was ultimately a result of Israel's policy of settlement, occupation and expulsion. Israel continued to demolish homes and essential facilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Checkpoints, the separation wall and other restrictions on movement limited the Palestinian population's access to education, health services, water and other basic necessities. Israeli settlers continued to attack Palestinians and Muslim and Christian holy sites. Palestinian prisoners were tortured and detained in conditions that violated the relevant international conventions. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade had damaged the economy and infrastructure in ways that could prove irreparable.

16. Israel must be prevailed upon to halt its aggression on Gaza, end its settlement activities and return to the peace process on the basis of the relevant international resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. The Palestinian people must be allowed to realize their inalienable right to self-determination in an independent and sovereign State, on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, having full membership in the United Nations. An equitable solution to the Palestine refugee issue must be reached in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

17. Lebanon had received around half of the necessary funding for the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Barid camp, but needed further resources to complete the work and provide rental subsidies and facilities for displaced refugees. Action would also be required in the coming weeks in order to address the budget deficit of UNRWA and pay staff salaries.

18. **Mr. Núñez Mosquera** (Cuba) said that the Committee's reaction to Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip, while prompt, could prove insufficient. The Committee might wish to request the Chair to ask the President of the Security Council to take practical action. The threat of veto from a major Power might prevent the Council from taking action, but it should not prevent the Committee from expressing its position.

19. **The Chair** said that he was prepared to act on that proposal if the Committee agreed.

20. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that it would be useful for as many actors as possible to appeal to the Security Council for an immediate end to the Israeli aggression.

21. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey) said that his country shared the grief of the people of the Gaza Strip. His Government condemned Israel's aggression and disproportionate use of force, and called for the Security Council to take action in order to ensure the immediate cessation of hostilities. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey would join a delegation of the League of Arab States for a visit to the Gaza Strip.

22. Turkey had supported Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations, and would do the same for its current application to become a non-member observer State. The State of Palestine should be viable, sovereign and contiguous, on the basis of the 1967 borders, and East Jerusalem should be its capital. The illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip violated Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and must be lifted. Turkey would continue to support a peaceful solution to the conflict, which would enable Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace in accordance with numerous international resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

23. *Draft resolution: Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People*

24. *Draft resolution: Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat*

25. *Draft resolution: Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine*

26. *Draft resolution: Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat*

27. **The Chair** said that the four draft resolutions, which were to be submitted to the General Assembly under agenda item 37, were based on the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, but had been updated to reflect recent political and other developments. The Bureau recommended the draft resolutions for approval by the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the four draft resolutions.

28. *It was so decided.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (Working Paper No. 4)

29. **The Chair** drew attention to Working Paper No. 4, which contained applications for accreditation to the Committee submitted by four non-governmental organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Bureau had concluded that the four organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that they should be accredited. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the applications.

30. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from the Environmental Media Centre (Ramallah), the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (Israel), The MILLA Project (United States of America) and Save Youth Future Society (Gaza) were approved.*

Other matters

31. **The Chair** recalled that the special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November 2012 and requested delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level. He appealed to all Committee members and observers to actively participate in the discussion of agenda item 37 "Question of Palestine" in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and to support the adoption of the draft resolutions.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.