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

Summary record of the 354th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 4 October 2013, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Vice-Chair) (Cuba)

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In the absence of Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that the first Israeli-Palestinian peace talks since September 2010 had been held in Jerusalem on 14 August 2013, hours after Israel had released 26 Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture and that, on 15 and 16 August 2013, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had met Palestinian and Israeli officials in Ramallah and Jerusalem. Addressing the General Assembly on 24 September 2013, United States President Barack Obama had stated that his country was determined to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, at his meeting with President Abbas later that day, had reiterated the United States position that the Israeli-Palestinian border should be based on the 4 June 1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps.

3. Also on 24 September 2013, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had urged the Israeli authorities to halt its demolitions of Bedouin structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which constituted a violation of international humanitarian law. Recent demolitions carried out by the Israeli authorities in the Jordan Valley had left 10 families homeless, and European diplomats trying to deliver tents and emergency aid to those families had been stopped and manhandled by Israeli soldiers.

4. At a meeting convened by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 25 September 2013, donors had reaffirmed their assessment of the state readiness of the Palestinian Authority. Reports by the State of Palestine, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations had highlighted that economic stagnation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was reducing the funds available to the Palestinian Government. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee had therefore called on donors to increase their financial assistance above the level of their current commitments.

5. In his address to the General Assembly on 26 September 2013, President Abbas had expressed his determination to conclude a peace agreement with Israel within nine months and had urged the international community to seize what could be the last chance to achieve peace. On 27 September 2013, the Quartet had issued a statement reaffirming its determination to support the parties' shared commitment to reaching a permanent status agreement within that time frame. Also on 27 September 2013, a ministerial-level meeting of supporters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been held on the margins of the General Assembly. That meeting had been jointly chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil Elaraby, and had been attended by Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah. Ministers had expressed particular concern about the financial plight of UNRWA and had emphasized that a strengthened Agency would foster regional stability.

6. Israel had announced the construction of more than 2,000 housing units in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Israeli Government had also placed 91 settlements on a national priority funding list, increasing by six a roster of those eligible for supplemental subsidies.

Elections of additional officers to the Bureau of the Committee

7. **The Chair** said that the granting to Palestine of non-member observer State status in the United Nations had increased the workload on the Committee and its Bureau. To facilitate its work, he proposed that the Committee should enlarge the Bureau by electing Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Mr. Emvula (Namibia) and Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) as additional Vice-Chairs.

8. *Mr. Percaya (Indonesia), Mr. Emvula (Namibia) and Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) were elected by acclamation.*

9. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that, as Vice-Chair of the Committee, he would work tirelessly to help the Committee fulfil its mandate.

10. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said membership of the Bureau would enable her country to more actively support the Palestinian people in their

heroic struggle for justice. Peace and security in the Middle East could only be achieved with the establishment of a free and sovereign State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. Much progress towards that goal had already been achieved and she hoped that the State of Palestine would soon be accepted as the 194th State Member of the United Nations. She reiterated the Committee's appeal for 2014 to be proclaimed the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and for a global campaign to be launched to compel Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian land.

11. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that international solidarity with the Namibian people had helped his country achieve independence and suggested that international solidarity with the Palestinian people could likewise play a key role in their struggle to end the Israeli occupation. Namibia would work diligently to support the Committee's work and looked forward to the time when the Palestinian people would fully enjoy their rights.

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the decision by the General Assembly to accord Palestine non-member observer State status meant that the Palestinian people were one step closer to their goal of an independent and free Palestinian State. He welcomed the expansion of the Bureau, which would enable the Committee to redouble its efforts to achieve that objective.

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

13. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had visited the State of Palestine in August 2013 and had met with members of the Government and non-governmental and youth organizations. He had signed a country agreement between the United Nations and the State of Palestine and had placed a wreath on the tomb of the late Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat. A large delegation from the State of Palestine, which had included the Palestinian President and Prime Minister, had attended the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly and had held numerous bilateral and multilateral meetings.

14. The United States President had reiterated the international community's position that the Israeli-Palestinian border should be based on the 4 June 1967

borders with mutually agreed land swaps. Palestine hoped to achieve an agreement with Israel on that basis within six to nine months of the start of negotiations. There was little likelihood of a breakthrough in the peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel, however, because Israel refused to comply with Security Council resolutions and international law. Israel continued to build and expand its illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, demolish Palestinian homes and violate the sanctity of Palestinian holy sites. Meanwhile, over a million Palestinians continued to suffer the effects of Israel's illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. Welcoming Israel's decision to release a number of Palestinian political prisoners, some of whom had been languishing in Israeli prisons for over 20 years, he reminded the Committee that approximately 6,000 Palestinians remained in Israeli detention. Peace with Israel could not be achieved until all those prisoners were released.

15. On 22 October 2013, the Security Council would hold an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, which he invited all Committee members to attend with a view to demonstrating the international community's support for Palestinian rights. The international community must take a stand against Israel's illegal actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israel must not be allowed to profit from its illegal occupation. In that connection, he commended the guidelines adopted by the European Union and due to come into effect in January 2014 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the Union, and he strongly urged all States to adopt similar measures. He also encouraged the members of the Committee and observers to attend the Special Meeting in Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which would be held on 25 November 2013.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2013/CRP.2)

16. **Mr. Grima** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee, said that in accordance with established practice, the Secretariat would continue to update the report, as necessary, in consultation with the Rapporteur, in order to reflect any new developments which might take place before it was forwarded to the General Assembly.

17. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that his country strongly supported the draft report. Although a small minority of countries continued to seek to undermine the work of the Committee and international law, there was broad global consensus that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination must be upheld. It was very disturbing that Israeli forces continued to carry out raids, assassinations and house demolitions and to impede the free movement of goods and people. Although certain Palestinian prisoners had been released, Israel was arresting other Palestinians to take their place. That was unacceptable. He called on the Israeli authorities to adhere to international law.

18. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider the draft report chapter by chapter.

19. *Chapters I to VII were adopted.*

20. **The Chair** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report as a whole.

21. *The draft report, as a whole, was adopted.*

22. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that, although the resumption of peace negotiations between the State of Palestine and Israel was a welcome development, it was unlikely that a resolution to the conflict could be achieved in the near future because Israel continued to violate international law and United Nations resolutions. The Committee therefore needed to focus on achieving viable short- and medium-term goals. It should encourage as many States as possible to recognize the State of Palestine and seek to foster broader international support for the rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation encouraged the Committee to continue its engagement with the media and civil society organizations to raise awareness of the Palestinian people's struggle for justice. Between 2008 and 2013, Indonesia had trained 1,200 Palestinians to help ensure their readiness for eventual Statehood and would continue to support capacity-building programmes to enhance Palestinians' skills.

23. Israel must not be allowed to benefit economically from its occupation of Palestinian land. In that connection, he commended the guidelines adopted by the European Union on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the Union. All States should adopt similar measures.

Accreditation of civil society organizations to the Committee (Working Paper No. 6)

24. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 6, which contained requests for accreditation that had been submitted by three non-governmental organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Bureau had concluded that the three organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that the requests should be approved.

25. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from the Youth Development Resource Centre (Occupied Palestinian Territory), the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (Occupied Palestinian Territory) and the International Association of Justice Watch (Islamic Republic of Iran) were approved.*

Other matters

26. **The Chair** said that the Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with the Geneva-based Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, had conducted a three-week training programme for two Palestinian Government staff members. Moreover, two members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine were participating in the Committee's 2013 training programme for Palestinian professional staff and were working with the Division during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

27. On 21 October 2013, in collaboration with the Division, the Committee's Working Group on cooperation with civil society would convene its first side event, at which a board member of *Breaking the Silence*, an Israeli non-governmental organization founded by former members of the Israel Defense Forces who had served in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, would talk about his experience and give a presentation of a book that had recently been published by that organization entitled *Our Harsh Logic — Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies from the Occupied Territories, 2000-2010*. All members of the Committee and observers were encouraged to attend.

28. In conclusion, he recalled that the special meeting to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 25 November 2013 and requested delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.