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

Summary record of the 355th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 November 2013, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Diallo (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 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 on 21 October 2013, the Committee's Working Group on cooperation with civil society had convened its first side event, at which a board member of *Breaking the Silence*, an Israeli non-governmental organization, had talked about the experiences of Israeli soldiers stationed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The event had aroused considerable interest and resulted in a lively discussion.

3. On 22 October, 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 29 October, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 had introduced his report to the Third Committee, in which he had described the activities of international corporations in relation to Israeli settlements. He had recommended that the General Assembly should request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice as to the legal consequences of the prolonged occupation of Palestine if diplomacy failed to resolve the conflict.

4. On 30 October, the Israeli Interior Ministry had announced that it would proceed with a plan to build 1,500 additional housing units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement in East Jerusalem. Also on 30 October, Israel had released 26 more Palestinian prisoners who had been held in detention since before the conclusion of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Israel had agreed to release a total of 104 Palestinian prisoners as part of its agreement to resume peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

5. On 6 November, the Israeli Ministry of Housing had published tenders for the construction of 1,061 housing units in settlements in the West Bank and 1,255 units in settlements in East Jerusalem. Also on 6 November, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had informed the Fourth Committee that unless funds were found to

cover the \$48 million deficit in the Agency's General Fund, it would not be able to pay the salaries of teachers, medical personnel and social workers, bringing its operations to a standstill.

6. The Bureau of the Committee had issued a statement on 7 November, copies of which had been circulated to members, in which it had condemned the ongoing Israeli settlement expansion; and, lastly, on 9 November, the Belgian Foreign Minister had confirmed that the status of the State of Palestine's delegation to his country had been upgraded to that of a mission.

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

7. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Palestinian leadership had three months earlier entered into negotiations with Israel in good faith on the basis of the long-standing terms of reference and parameters established between the parties. Palestine's negotiating team had, therefore, been compelled to resign en masse following Israel's provocative declaration of its intention to build thousands of housing units in existing and new settlements and the Government had issued a statement explaining that the negotiating team was unable to proceed in the political process under such conditions.

8. Belatedly honouring an agreement that had been reached under the Oslo Accords, Israel had released another group of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli detention for more than twenty years. Although that long-overdue step was welcome, the occupying Power continued to arrest and detain Palestinian civilians, including children under 12 years of age, on a daily basis.

9. The humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip resulting from Israel's ongoing blockade continued to deepen. Although Israel had temporarily eased certain restrictions on materials entering the Strip, its reimposition of a more comprehensive blockade meant that Palestinian civilians in Gaza continued to be denied access to essential goods and medicines. Furthermore, fuel shortages and Gaza's crumbling infrastructure were causing power cuts of up to 16 hours per day, causing great hardship to Palestinian families and impeding the vital work of the Strip's overburdened health centres and hospitals. Gazans

were finding it more and more difficult to obtain access to sources of safe drinking water. According to a 2012 United Nations report entitled *Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?*, unless urgent steps were taken to reverse that catastrophic situation, the Gaza Strip would be virtually uninhabitable by the end of the decade.

10. In the Second and Fourth Committees, Member States had voted overwhelmingly to adopt resolutions on issues relevant to the question of Palestine, including resolutions on UNRWA, Palestine refugees, Israel's ongoing human rights violations and the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory over their natural resources. Her delegation remained concerned, however, that certain States had declined to vote in favour of some of those resolutions and it was very much hoped that they would reverse their positions when action was taken on them in the plenary Assembly.

11. She encouraged all Committee members and observers to become sponsors of the draft resolutions before the Committee at that meeting and warmly welcomed the Committee's intention to proclaim 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, which would help underline the commitment of the United Nations and the international community to the cause of peace. She 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.

12. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) said that, as the coordinator of the Group of African States in the Fourth Committee, his delegation had urged them all to adopt a common position when voting on draft resolutions pertaining to the question of Palestine. Regrettably, a small number of African States were not abiding by the common position adopted by the Group. Egypt would raise that matter with the countries concerned and urged all States, including those in other regional groups, to vote in favour of all resolutions that strengthened support for Palestinian rights.

Report on the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, Istanbul, 8 and 9 October 2013

13. **Ms. Seward** (Department of Public Information) said that the Department of Public Information had organized the International Media Seminar on Peace in

the Middle East in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey.. The Seminar, which had opened with messages from the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Committee, had brought together journalists, bloggers, activists, film-makers, academics, policymakers and diplomats from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel, the wider Middle East region, Europe and the United States, as well as senior United Nations officials. The event had been promoted extensively across social media platforms, with a view to encouraging online engagement before, during and after the event by participants and other interested stakeholders around the world.

14. Participants had examined shifting media coverage of Middle East peace efforts and the question of Palestine; Palestinian refugees and the contemporary news agenda; youth activism, digital journalism and social media in the Middle East; and the role and impact of film and other visual media on coverage of Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A special effort had been made to increase the participation of women and youth. As a result, there had been a good gender and generational balance among participants. The feedback that had been received from both participants and observers had been extremely positive.

15. **Mr. Çevik** (Turkey) said that his country was pleased that the International Media Seminar had promoted networking among governmental and non-governmental actors. Although strong political will and great determination were required to achieve a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, non-governmental organizations, particularly in the media, played a key role in efforts to achieve that objective. They could shape the policies adopted by leaders and positively change perceptions among people on both sides of the dispute.

16. Turkey itself remained committed to the two-State solution and the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side in peace and security with Israel. Welcoming the resumption of talks between the two parties, Turkey strongly urged them to refrain from taking any steps that could jeopardize negotiations.

17. Lastly, Turkey congratulated the delegation of the State of Palestine on its very first vote in the General Assembly, when it had voted to elect a judge to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Consideration of draft resolutions on the question of Palestine

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

Draft resolution: Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat

Draft resolution: Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

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

18. **The Chair**, introducing the four draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 36, Question of Palestine, said that they had been updated from those adopted at the sixty-seventh session to reflect recent political and other developments. He drew the Committee's attention to some of the new provisions, relating to the estimation of the economic costs of the Israeli occupation, the proclamation of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (draft resolution on the Committee, paras. 5 bis and 7 bis); the continued participation of eminent speakers in meetings and conferences (draft resolution on the Division for Palestinian Rights, para. 4); the illegality of Israeli settlement activities, and the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (draft resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, 18th preambular para. and para. 3 bis) . All four texts had been the subject of extensive informal consultations by the delegation of Palestine with various regional groups, and had been approved by the Bureau. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the four draft resolutions.

19. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

20. **The Chair** 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. He appealed to all Committee members and observers to participate actively in the discussion of the question of Palestine in the plenary Assembly and to support the adoption of the draft resolutions.

21. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her country deeply appreciated the Committee's adoption of the four draft resolutions, which reaffirmed key principles and positions regarding the question of Palestine, and she trusted that those resolutions would receive strong backing from the international community when action was taken on them in the General Assembly.

22. Expressing her delegation's gratitude to the Department of Public Information and Turkey for organizing and hosting what had been a highly successful International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, she emphasized the importance of interaction among State-sponsored media, civil-society and non-governmental organizations to ensure that the facts about Palestine were made known. She hoped that the Department and the Committee would continue to collaborate in organizing other similar events.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.