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

Summary record of the 364th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 3 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Feltman (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs)

Chair: Mr. Seck (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of the Chair of the Committee

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the office of Chair of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) nominated Mr. Seck (Senegal) for the office of Chair of the Committee.

4. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) seconded the nomination.

5. *Mr. Seck (Senegal) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Seck (Senegal) took the Chair.*

7. **The Chair** welcomed the role played by the United Nations since its founding as a catalyst for international efforts to foster dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Despite those efforts, however, the political and security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate: the Gaza Strip had just experienced one of the deadliest summers in its history, which was all the more deplorable as 2014 had been designated as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Israel's ongoing settlement policy and Judaization of Al-Quds, and the blockade of the Gaza Strip — unilateral measures that ran counter to international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council — were unacceptable and must be renounced by Israel. In addition, thousands of Palestinian prisoners continued to be detained illegally in Israeli prisons and millions of Palestinian refugees had lost their homes and possessions.

8. The Committee continued to play a key role in raising international awareness about the Palestinian people's inalienable rights. Only collective action could constrain Israel, as the occupying Power, to meet its obligations under international law: he called on the international community to adopt practical measures to that end.

Tribute to the memory of Ibra Deguene Ka, former Chair of the Committee

9. *At the invitation of the Chair, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.*

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

10. **Mr. Rajasingham** (Head, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Country Office, Occupied Palestinian Territory), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that there was widespread concern over the lack of protection for civilians: during the most recent conflict in the Gaza Strip, nearly 1,500 Palestinian civilians, over a third of them children, had been killed, and a further 11,000 Palestinians had been injured. In addition, five civilians had been killed in Israel, and several dozen injured. Violations of international humanitarian law were also of significant concern, specifically regarding the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack. As of late August 2014, some 140 families had lost three or more family members in the same incident, for a total of 739 civilian fatalities. There were currently more internally displaced persons than there had ever been since 1967: some 270,000 were hosted by UNRWA; 30,000 were living in government shelters; and yet others were being sheltered by host families. As a result of the crisis, a total of 100,000 individuals had lost their homes and were expected to remain internally displaced in the long term.

11. Massive damage had been done to property and infrastructure, including houses, hospitals and clinics, water and electricity networks, and United Nations facilities. Specifically, the Gaza Strip power plant had been shelled repeatedly and ultimately shut down for a time; currently, lack of fuel contributed to outages of 18 hours a day on average. The water and sanitation infrastructure had suffered significant blows, with 12 per cent of wells damaged or destroyed; and there was a significant lack of access to piped or municipal water. Finally, an already grave health situation had been made worse by the death or injury of a number of medical staff while on duty.

12. An appeal had been made to the international community for funding of US\$ 551.2m. Some 1.8 million people had been affected by the crisis in the

Gaza Strip: food security and shelter were most urgently needed, but other requirements, including water and sanitation, health, and education were also crucial. Nevertheless, even if the appeal was successful in securing the funds, it would not be sufficient to restore the Gaza Strip to its state just prior to the beginning of the conflict. Enormous reconstruction efforts would still be needed, which in turn depended on the lifting of the blockade. Once Palestinians were able to return to their livelihoods they would be able to support their economy as in the past.

13. **Mr. Wright** (Director, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Representative Office, New York) expressed support for the presentation given by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Country Office (OCHA) and appreciation for the Office's situation reports during the most recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. He said that reconstruction needs far exceeded original estimates, with some 80,000 refugees expected to need support. Moreover, there were still 54,000 homeless people currently relying on support from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That number was equivalent to the total number of people displaced during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009. At the peak of the recent conflict, UNRWA facilities had provided shelter to some 292,000 people.

14. Clearance of explosive remnants of war was a sine qua non for reconstruction to begin in the Gaza Strip. It was estimated that some 8,000 unexploded munitions, or 10 per cent of that used by the Israeli Defense Forces, remained in the Gaza Strip. To clear the area, the United Nations Mine Action Service urgently needed resources on the order of \$4.5m, he appealed to Member States to contribute to that cause.

15. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that he supported the appeals to the donor community to respond to humanitarian needs and to clear unexploded ordnance. At the meeting slated to be held in Cairo on 12 October 2014, the Palestinian Authority would call for \$4 billion to rebuild Gaza, but that was in addition to immediate humanitarian needs. Participants in the Cairo conference should be generous with their funding pledges but should also focus on the political will needed to rebuild and to put a permanent end to Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip.

16. The Government of the State of Palestine had agreed with Hamas to allow a national consensus government to supervise the process of reconstruction in collaboration with the United Nations so that it could function as a Government in all parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory including the Gaza Strip, and in all areas of Government functions including education, health and reconstruction. Participation in the Cairo Conference would therefore make a political statement in favour of the national consensus government. Negotiations were also under way with Security Council members and the Troika of the League of Arab States to draft a Security Council resolution on a timetable to end the occupation, which was the longest in contemporary history. Moreover, an independent State of Palestine should be established within the framework of an international consensus on a two-State solution.

17. The Committee was in the forefront of the fight for justice for the Palestinian people and the Chair would articulate its position before the Security Council. A draft resolution to be put before the Security Council, based on an initiative by President Abbas and endorsed by Arab foreign ministers, stated that attempts to negotiate in good faith with the assistance of United States Secretary of State John Kerry had not been successful owing to intransigence on the Israeli side, which had also entrenched the occupation by expanding settlements, thereby giving the wrong signal to the Israeli public. Israel should be preparing its people for the end of settlement activities, not increasing them. Israel should also release the last group of Palestinian prisoners who had been detained since before the signing of the Oslo Accords. Israel had closed the door to peace but the State of Palestine was now seeking to reopen it through a resolution that would involve Israel's negotiating an end to the occupation. If certain parties blocked that effort in the Security Council, it would be an indication that they did not truly wish to explore a new path to peace, having failed to use the tools available to them during the negotiations that took place under their auspices.

18. However, the State of Palestine would not give up on peace. It would continue to pursue initiatives to that end, including becoming a party to international treaties such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to prove to those who denied its existence its acceptance by the international community as a State that could act as a responsible

member of humanity. The assistance of friends of the State of Palestine, including France and the Russian Federation, would also be instrumental. The State of Palestine would not give up until justice and independence had been achieved.

19. **Mr. Eler** (Turkey) said that the draft report reflected the dire situation on the ground, with ongoing settlement activities, arrests, excessive use of force against civilians, raids in the West Bank, and attacks on the Gaza Strip, all of which undermined peace talks and institution-building efforts. He condemned the plan to build 2,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. Settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other unilateral actions were unacceptable, a violation of international law and an attempt to change the historical, cultural and religious fabric of Palestine and especially East Jerusalem. The recent ceasefire in Gaza was a welcome development and he hoped it would be respected. The opening of the crossings between Gaza and Israel to allow the entry of construction equipment and humanitarian goods should lead to the abolition of all restrictions on the entry of goods and people into the Gaza Strip. Turkey had worked to bring about the ceasefire and would continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinians living under difficult conditions in the Gaza Strip, especially through UNRWA and the World Health Organization. Furthermore, 123 injured Gazans had travelled with their accompanying family members to Turkey for medical treatment. Turkey would closely follow developments in the Security Council with regard to the resolution referred to by the representative of the State of Palestine.

20. **Mr. Al-Budair** (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation looked forward to cooperating with the Committee in its efforts to support the Palestinian people.

21. **Mr. Atlassi** (Observer for Morocco) said that Morocco had always condemned aggression by the Israeli occupying Power against Palestinians. It had also contributed \$5m in aid and medicines for the Palestinians. His delegation would spare no effort to ensure the adoption of the resolution to be introduced in the Security Council.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2014/CRP.2)

22. **Mr. Grima** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2014/CRP.2), 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.

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

Chapters I to VI

24. *Chapters I to VI were adopted.*

Chapter VII

25. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan), referring to paragraph 90 of the draft report, proposed inserting, after the words “the BRICS countries”, a reference to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Developing Eight Countries Organization for Economic Cooperation. Those regional organizations should also be the focus of the Committee’s attention.

26. **Mr. Mashabane** (South Africa) said that it would be useful to understand the reasoning behind the reference to the BRICS countries and to determine whether such reference would advance the cause of the Palestinian people. There was no doubt that many regional organizations did meaningful work in Palestine, but he cautioned against setting a precedent which might result in the inclusion of a long list of regional organizations in future reports.

27. **Mr. Munir** (Pakistan) said that other regional organizations were also important and needed to be approached to make the pro-Palestinian case stronger. The Committee’s outreach should not be limited to one or two such organizations.

28. **Mr. Grieger** (Chief, Division for Palestinian Rights) said that the reference to the BRICS countries had been included on the basis of the Committee’s outreach over the past few years to organize political meetings, such as the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Beijing in June 2013. For 2015 the Committee had

approached the Russian Federation and India; discussions with Brazil were also ongoing. He proposed amending paragraph 90 to read “such as the BRICS countries and other organizations with an interest in supporting the Palestinian people”, subject to further discussion with interested parties and the Rapporteur.

29. **Mr. Uttam** (India) said that he appreciated the views expressed by the representative of South Africa and supported the amendment proposed by the Rapporteur, subject to further discussion.

30. *Chapter VII, subject to agreed redrafting, was adopted.*

31. *The draft report as a whole, and subject to agreed redrafting, was adopted.*

Other matters

32. **The Chair** said that the New York session of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, conducted by the Division for Palestinian Rights, had started on 9 September 2014 with the arrival of two trainees from Palestine. The Division, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), had also organized a three-week training programme for the Diplomatic Attaché of the Palestinian Government. The programme had contributed meaningfully to the capacity-building of Palestinian Government institutions.

33. In conclusion, he recalled that the special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be held on 24 November 2014 and requested delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.