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

Summary record of the 377th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 4 August 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 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, since the previous meeting of the Committee, on 7 April 2016 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had visited Ramallah and Gaza and met with Palestinian and Israeli officials.

3. The Middle East Quartet had issued a report on 1 July 2016 on the situation on the ground, focusing on major threats to achieving a negotiated peace and offering recommendations to advance the two-State solution.

4. On 12 July 2016 the Security Council had held an open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, at which Mr. Emvula, Permanent Representative of Namibia and Vice-Chair of the Committee, had delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee.

5. On 22 July 2016 the Bureau of the Committee had held a meeting.

Election of Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of the Committee

6. **The Chair** said that Mr. Djani (Indonesia) had been nominated for election as Vice-Chair and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) for election as Rapporteur.

7. *Mr. Djani (Indonesia) and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) were elected Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, respectively, by acclamation.*

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

8. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained critical as a result of the occupying Power’s persistence in committing illegal, destructive acts. Conditions on the ground were fragile, tensions were high and a political solution remained out of sight, in spite of recent efforts to revive a peace process. The Israeli Government continued to pursue policies

contrary to the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, and to reject peace. In particular, it persisted with its colonization of Palestinian land, in grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Rome Statute and innumerable United Nations resolutions. It continued to confiscate Palestinian land, destroy Palestinian property, exploit Palestinian resources and forcibly displace Palestinian civilians as it pushed ahead with its illegal settlement project in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around occupied East Jerusalem. Along with the use of excessive and lethal military force, settlement construction and expansion was the Israeli Government’s main means of entrenching the occupation. Settler violence and terror continued to wreak havoc on innocent Palestinian lives.

9. The previous week, Israel had announced plans to build 770 more settlement units in the illegal settlement of “Gilo”. The area had already been severely impacted by the construction of the wall, which was fragmenting the Palestinian land and isolating cities, towns, villages and refugee camps. The announcement was only one of many in recent months, belying Israel’s stated commitment to the two-State solution.

10. June 2016 marked the forty-ninth year of the Israeli occupation, a period throughout which the occupying Power had gravely violated Palestinians’ human rights. The Israeli Government continued to intimidate and imprison Palestinians, denigrate their holy places and foment violence with inflammatory rhetoric, creating a dangerous and unstable situation. June 2016 also marked the ninth year of the Gaza blockade, which imprisoned and dehumanized nearly 2 million people. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remained dire, as documented by various United Nations agencies in the field, notably the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. According to a United Nations report, if the situation remained unaddressed, Gaza would be uninhabitable by 2020. All countries able to provide support for reconstruction and for the ongoing humanitarian work should do so.

11. The international community, the United Nations Security Council and the Middle East Quartet were incapable of holding Israel to account. Israel remained intransigent in the face of regional and international initiatives aimed at ending the occupation, such as the

Arab Peace Initiative and the work by the French Government which had led to the Middle East Peace initiative meeting in June 2016; Palestine, on the other hand, was doing all it could to advance the peace process.

12. The Quartet's long-awaited report, released on 1 July, was disappointing and even offensive. Failing to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, it took a skewed approach to critical issues and ignored others. It attempted to draw symmetries between the two sides, equating individual Palestinian acts of violence with official, deliberately implemented Israeli policies. It characterized nearly all Israeli actions as responses to Palestinian actions, and liberally classified the latter as terrorist acts. The report constituted yet another attempt to merely manage the conflict. The path to a peaceful solution was already clearly delineated; it was based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Her Government would continue to seek the Committee's support for pursuing that path in both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

13. She sought the Committee's support for a proposal that the General Assembly should adopt a resolution declaring 2017, which would be the fiftieth year of the occupation, the international year to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The resolution would have no programme budget implications.

14. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) expressed total support for the proposed initiative, which deserved the support of the Committee. The year ahead should be used constructively, to end the barbarities being committed against the Palestinian people.

Report on the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, held on 3 and 4 May 2016 in Dakar, Senegal

Report on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 19 and 20 May 2016 in Stockholm, Sweden

Report on the United Nations International Conference in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held on 29 and 30 June 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland

15. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), Rapporteur, reporting on the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, held on 3 and 4 May 2016 in Dakar,

Senegal, said that the Conference had been held in collaboration with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Speakers had underscored the fact that Jerusalem remained critical to a peaceful settlement. Development, employment and political expression in the divided Jerusalem were stunted. While some participants looked for avenues to stimulate development in the city with international help, others questioned whether development under occupation was even possible. There had been calls to sever cooperation with Israel, ban settlement products and impose sanctions. Participants had reviewed various proposals to resolve the status of Jerusalem under a peace agreement, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian State, and had held that the Jerusalem issue should be resolved as the top priority. In addition to the participation of 44 Governments, three inter-governmental organizations and three United Nations entities, Senegalese civil society had been enthusiastically represented.

16. Reporting on the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held on 19 and 20 May 2016 in Stockholm, Sweden, entitled "Agenda 2030: Paving the Way toward a Peaceful, Independent and Sustainable State of Palestine", he said that the Government of Sweden had announced that it would increase bilateral support to Palestine by 50 per cent, to a total of \$ 100 million annually. Participants at the Seminar had examined the challenges to the State of Palestine's implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the occupation. Palestine's right to self-determination and the two-State solution had been undermined by recent developments, including settlement expansion and the demolition of unprecedented numbers of Palestinian homes by Israel. Ministers of the State of Palestine had indicated that it was working on a National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 and was committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, however, it would be difficult to achieve them without sovereignty, respect for human and economic rights or control over its own natural resources. Ending the occupation would be a prerequisite for any meaningful development. The important role of education in promoting non-violence and building trust among the younger generations had been highlighted.

17. Reporting on the United Nations International Conference in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held on 29 and 30 June 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland,

he said that the Conference had been relocated from Paris to Geneva, where it had been held at United Nations headquarters. The theme of the Conference had been especially timely in view of the French initiative and the anticipated Quartet report. Participants had stressed the importance of strong international leadership of the peace process, called for a multilateral effort along the lines of the P5+1 initiative on Iran, expressed support for the French initiative and expanding the Quartet to include key regional and European countries, and called for the Security Council to endorse the Arab Peace Initiative.

18. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Observer for Egypt) asked why the United Nations International Conference in support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace had been held in Geneva instead of in Paris as originally scheduled.

19. **The Chair** said that the French Government had requested that the Conference be either postponed or held elsewhere for reasons related to the French initiative then under way; in response, a decision had been taken to hold the Conference in Geneva.

20. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) asked whether the conclusions reached and the recurrent themes of the various conferences could be shared with a wider United Nations audience. Informed presentations on the topic could enhance discussions in the Security Council and other forums. Sharing information would serve to raise awareness, which was part of the Committee's mandate.

21. **Mr. Tamburi** (Director, Division for Palestinian Rights) said that the Committee made every effort to disseminate information as widely as possible, via its website and FaceBook page. In addition, the statements made at the conferences were sent to all conference participants, as well as to participants in the previous iterations of those events, and to staff working in relevant United Nations departments and field agencies. However, it was true that Committee members themselves should also try to disseminate the information as widely as possible.

22. **Mr. Matjila** (South Africa) said that the shrinking of the Palestinian land was of major concern to South Africa. The critical issue was that while individual Member States were doing much to support Palestine, the sum total of their activities had failed to shake the Israeli occupation, or to discourage Israel's plans for further encroachment. The various international initiatives designed to end the occupation

were without effect and the Security Council was failing to make progress; it was thus unclear what next steps could usefully be taken. While it was widely recognized that international political leadership was needed, perhaps it was necessary to reconsider what type of leadership was required. Civil society might have a role to play in the peace process. He asked whether the bureau was coming up with a plan of action.

23. The proposal for the General Assembly to declare 2017 as the year to end the Israeli occupation would have South Africa's support. However, more details regarding the proposal, and what actions would be taken to make it meaningful, were needed.

24. **The Chair** said that the Committee would have a strategic retreat in October 2017, when it would focus on how to get the peace process moving.

25. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that while the Palestinian issue had been eclipsed by other international issues that appeared more pressing to many, the Committee had a duty to persist in bolstering momentum on and raising global awareness of the issue. His time in Geneva, where he had been in contact with people involved in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, had enabled him to better appreciate the perspectives of both parties. It was clear that the peace process could not move forward without the involvement of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

26. The Committee's efforts to increase global awareness of the question of Palestine should not be limited to conferences. Furthermore, it should target populations whose knowledge of the issue was minimal. To that end, social media campaigns and town hall meetings could be used to great effect in the United States of America. The Committee might also consider holding one of its conferences in that country in order to highlight the issue.

27. International coverage of the raising of the Palestinian flag on the 2015 commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had been a major coup. The Committee should find ways to build on that momentum. It should also make efforts to raise its profile in other United Nations specialized agencies in order to garner support from their members for its work. Lastly, the Committee should take concrete steps to follow up on and add value to the various international conferences and

processes, including the meetings of the Middle East Quartet.

28. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia) said that she would welcome more information on the local elections that would be held in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in October. Her delegation hoped that the elections would cover the entire occupied territory and have a positive outcome. It also looked forward to the full report of the Geneva meeting, as that outcome would inform the Committee's next steps. The Committee would do well to look more closely at the creative ideas shared by the representatives of South Africa and Indonesia, particularly the idea of a media campaign, which would make it possible to reach the young.

29. It was remarkable that after 50 years, the Palestinian cause remained a concern for many. The Committee should use the momentum generated by the Geneva meeting to find new ways of bringing people together. Against great odds, her country, along with South Africa and many others, had endured times of hopelessness and darkness to achieve their sovereignty. Palestine could find hope in the example set by those countries. In closing, Namibia looked forward to supporting the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the international year of ending the occupation of Palestine.

30. **The Chair** said that the Committee should use the forthcoming summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) to further promote the Palestinian cause, in cooperation with its NAM counterpart.

31. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) reiterated his Government's militant support for the Palestinian cause. The existence of official diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine and the presence of an Ecuadorian embassy in Ramallah and a Palestinian embassy in Quito attested to Ecuador's long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people. His delegation attached great importance to the Committee's mandate of working to uphold the Palestinian people's inalienable rights — to freedom, independence, self-government, the establishment of a Palestinian State, participation in the international community and protection from human rights violations.

32. As the seventieth anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba approached, the United Nations, which had been responsible for the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States, had yet to uphold its duty of

ensuring the creation of the State of Palestine. For its part, the Committee had the responsibility to remind international public opinion of the pressing need to resolve the Palestinian question. Owing to its political nature, the problem itself could only be resolved by the Organization's political bodies. An early settlement to the question of Palestine could have spared the world a great deal of injustice, violence, human rights violations and terrorism.

33. Ecuador welcomed several initiatives, including the Arab Peace Initiative and report of the Middle East Quartet, albeit with measured optimism. That report, which his delegation did not fully support because of the inadequate balance it struck, constituted a step in the right direction. The Committee must continue to work to raise public awareness among Israelis who did not support the extremist, closed positions of some of their politicians, as well as among Palestinians to promote the national unity that people would need to persevere in its struggle. If the two-State solution did not become a reality soon, it would become impossible to salvage.

34. The Committee's decision to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November would provide a vital opportunity to increase international public awareness of the question of Palestine. The Bureau must continue to direct the Committee's initiatives, with a view to facilitating the long-awaited resolution that his country welcomed and fully supported.

35. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that electoral campaigns ahead of the municipal elections to be held in Palestine in October 2016 were well under way, generating a renewed spirit among the Palestinian people. Even in the present moment of despair, participation in the democratic process gave people the feeling that they had a say and had begun to engender a new national dialogue, despite being a municipal electoral process. Discussion of local issues could not be divorced from the needs of civilian populations and the Israeli occupation, which affected every aspect of Palestinian life. Men and women were participating in the dialogue, and quotas were being set for participation by religious groups, including Christian groups. While her Government hoped to hold elections throughout the entire territory, including East Jerusalem, the occupying Power's obstruction was a complicating factor in that regard.

36. Her delegation would continue to update the Committee on the situation as it evolved, including on the possibility of holding parliamentary elections at a later date. The State of Palestine stood ready to explore the ideas suggested by the representatives of South Africa, Indonesia, Namibia, Senegal and Ecuador, such as using social media campaigns to reach out to Palestinian, Israeli, American and other youth. Palestinian youth were increasingly involved out of concern for their future. The Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine was actively involved in social media campaigns on specific issues and with thematic focus. It urged members of the Committee to explore and share that information in its own social media outreach efforts.

37. **The Chair** asked the Deputy Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine whether the Palestinian ambassador to Senegal had followed up on the proposal by a Senegalese Member of Parliament at the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem held in Dakar to convene a post-conference meeting with representatives of civil society, academia and regional organizations from the Middle East and Africa and to send recommendations to the Committee.

38. **Mr. Awawdeh** (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) said that the tendency of many worldwide to consider Israeli violations in terms of statistics made it important to humanize the victims of those violations. Compelling footage of children being beaten by Israeli soldiers for going outside to play, venturing outside their virtual imprisonment in Hebron, captured realities not expressed by figures. Moreover, the new spiritual leader of the Israeli Defence Forces — which Israel proclaimed the world's most moral army — had made an inflammatory statement to the effect that the rape of Palestinian women was permissible. Those developments underscored the importance of the forthcoming event in November on alternative media options and journalism under occupation.

Activities of the Working Group of the Committee

39. **The Chair** said that on 27 April, the Working Group had organized an open briefing on the situation of Palestinian child detainees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by two leading Palestinian speakers. The briefing had been followed by a lively question-and-answer session on the concept of military courts and their geographical jurisdiction, the role of

international monitors, the prospects for an International Criminal Court inquiry, access of defence lawyers for Palestinian children to Gaza and the Arria Formula Security Council meeting on the protection of Palestinian civilians, which had taken place in May.

Accreditation of civil society organizations to the Committee (Working Paper No. 3)

40. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 3, which contained the applications for accreditation that had been submitted by civil society organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Working Group of the Committee had concluded that the organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that they should be accredited.

41. *The requests for accreditation to the Committee were approved.*

Other matters

42. **The Chair** said that on 3 October, a Committee meeting would be held at which the Bureau would present the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly. Also in October, the next Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question would be held. In November, another Committee meeting would be held to approve resolutions on the question of Palestine. The annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would take place on 29 November. More details on the day's events would be circulated in due course.

43. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that his delegation, as one of the five Committee members currently on the Security Council, had some reservations regarding the report of the Middle East Quartet released in July, including on the questions of the illegality of settlements and on ending the Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, Malaysia would welcome concrete measures to implement the recommendations set out in the report, with a view to reversing negative trends on the ground and salvaging the two-State solution. To that end, his delegation supported the Council's presidential statement, which called on the Council to report regularly on the implementation of those recommendations. Unfortunately, the Council had failed to reach a consensus on monitoring and implementing the recommendations. Lastly, Malaysia

planned to hold another meeting on Palestine in the near future, focusing specifically on the issue of illegal Israeli settlements, and would be working closely with the Permanent Mission of the State of Palestine and other like-minded Council members.

44. **The Chair** said that, during the Security Council presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in February, the non-permanent members of the Council had formulated proposals on a two-track approach that addressed settlements and the international protection that the international community owed the Palestinian people.

The meeting rose at noon.