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

Summary record of the 378th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Seck (Senegal)

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

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

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

2. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had continued to deteriorate, in particular as a result of intensifying settlement activities. Given the urgency of the situation created by the illegal settlements, the Security Council had decided to hold an open debate on the question of Palestine. During the open debate, the illegal policies and practices of settlements had been condemned; the delegation of Israel had responded in offensive language by claiming that a form of ethnic cleansing was being perpetuated against the settlers.

3. An increasing number of Palestinian houses had been demolished, especially in Jerusalem and Area C; the inhabitants had been displaced and were experiencing extreme hardship, while the blockade of the Gaza Strip was ongoing. A number of Palestinian prisoners remained under administrative detention, an inhumane colonial practice; several were persisting in their hunger strikes. Administrative detention should be used only for very short periods of time and prisoners should otherwise be brought to trial as soon as possible. His delegation had documented the crimes committed against people in the Palestinian Occupied Territory in letters addressed to the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council.

4. With regard to settlement activities, his delegation believed that the Security Council must shoulder greater responsibility. While the Security Council had accurately condemned the settlements as illegal and the main obstacle to peace, it had not taken any practical steps to compel Israel to comply with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation would renew its efforts to have the Security Council adopt a resolution condemning the settlements and declaring them illegal. His country had been waiting too long: those delegations asking it to wait had not delivered on their promises. The

Security Council's upcoming open debate on Israeli settlements was a step in the right direction, but it was not sufficient since the open debate was not intended to lead to the adoption of a Security Council resolution.

5. During its open debate on 28 October 2016, the Security Council should focus on the illegal Israeli settlement activities, as there could be no political process without the cessation of illegal activity. In 2016, his delegation planned to request the International Criminal Court to undertake a formal investigation of the war crimes committed against Palestinians, in particular during the last war in Gaza.

6. It had been 50 years since the beginning of the Israeli occupation. The occupying Power must immediately withdraw from the areas it occupied. The General Assembly should declare 2017 the international year for ending the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine. The two-State solution required independence for the State of Palestine.

7. His delegation would also be seeking the further enhancement of the status of the State of Palestine at the United Nations. When Palestine had been accorded observer status, it had already become party to more than 40 conventions and had begun to participate in many forums on an equal footing with members. As his delegation believed that the State of Palestine should be able to sponsor resolutions in the General Assembly, a draft resolution would be submitted with the aim of allowing for such a possibility. If the status of the State of Palestine were to be enhanced, his delegation would consider applying to be the chair of the Group of 77 and China in 2019. The State of Palestine was not just an idea, but a reality: it wished to prove that it could be a responsible and capable State like any other, assuming its role as part of humanity.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2016/CRP.2)

8. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2016/CRP.2), said that the format of the report remained mostly unchanged except for the inclusion of some infographics and the reordering of the seven chapters. 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

the report was submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly.

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

Chapters I to V

10. *Chapters I to V were adopted.*

Chapters VI and VII

11. **Mr. Falouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), commenting on chapter VI of the report, said that his country had always supported the Palestinians, including by receiving refugees and giving all possible assistance. The suffering of Palestinian refugees was similar to that experienced by Syrian refugees today as a result of terrorist acts. However, his delegation expressed reservations regarding paragraph 92 of the draft report addressing the issue of Palestinian refugees in Syria: the content of that paragraph was unrelated to the report's purpose and should be omitted. The issue of refugees and Syria were discussed elsewhere and should not be referenced in the context of support for the Palestinian people. The report should instead focus on Israeli practices and violations; all issues related to the internal affairs of his country should be addressed in other forums. Consequently, he suggested that the third sentence of paragraph 92 should be deleted.

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the same language had been used in previous years and was not new. However, the record should reflect the reservations of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic.

13. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that her delegation noted the reservation expressed by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic. That reservation could be reflected in the report, which could also maintain the wording used in previous reports.

14. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) supported maintaining the wording used in of previous reports.

15. *Chapters VI and VII were adopted.*

16. *The draft report as a whole was adopted.*

Briefing on developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

17. **Mr. Elkhafif** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), speaking via video link from Geneva, said that the report on assistance provided by UNCTAD to the Palestinian people and on developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory addressed the cost of occupation and provided a number of recommendations. The economy had not registered any significant improvement in 2015. While economic growth had been 3.5 per cent overall, with growth in Gaza and the West Bank of 6.8 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively, such growth was in fact very modest and did not tell the entire story. Two factors contributed to the low economic growth: first, donor support levels were much lower than expected, and second, during the first quarter of 2015, Israeli authorities had refused to disburse to Palestine 70 per cent of its public revenues.

18. Other indicators were quite troubling. Unemployment was at 26 per cent overall and 38 per cent in Gaza. Two thirds of all people in Palestine were affected by food insecurity. In the West Bank, 1.1 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance; almost three quarters of people in Gaza required humanitarian assistance.

19. With 142 Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Israeli settlers accounted for 21 per cent of the area's population. The State of Palestine continued to be a captive market for Israel. In 2015, the Palestinian deficit was \$5.2 billion, 54 per cent of which was attributable to the trade deficit with Israel. According to the World Bank, there was an annual leakage of 5 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) to Israel. In 2015, that represented between \$600 million and \$700 million; if that money had been available to the Palestinian treasury, it would have increased public revenue by 21 per cent.

20. The infant mortality rate in Gaza was alarming, having increased from 12 per 1,000 to 50 per 1,000. The situation would become completely untenable by the year 2020.

21. Dual-use lists were another problem, as they prohibited the importation of civilian goods deemed by Israel as potentially having other, harmful uses. Such goods included essential factors of production, raw

materials, agricultural fertilizers, telecommunications equipment, steel, pipes and spare parts. The Palestinian furniture industry had been wiped out by restrictions placed on the thickness of wood.

22. Electricity shortages in Gaza affected the availability of clean drinking water to households and resulted in the dumping of 90 million litres of partially treated sewage into the sea every day. The health-care system was also badly affected by the lack of electricity.

23. Of the \$3.5 billion dollars that had been pledged by donors for 2016, only 40 per cent had been received by April. The full recovery of Gaza was not possible without lifting the blockade imposed by Israel.

24. The cost of occupation took two forms: the physical destruction of the Palestinian economic base, through the destruction and confiscation of assets, and the lack of policy space created by the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which prevented Palestinian policymakers from implementing policies tailored to the country's economic needs. Occupation had entailed the systematic erosion of the country's productive base, the loss of land, water and other natural resources, the fragmentation of the domestic market, the blockade of Gaza since 2007, the expansion of settlements, the construction of separation barriers and the isolation of the economy of East Jerusalem from Gaza. It was telling that, whereas in 1975 the contribution of the agricultural and industrial sectors to Palestine's GDP had been 37 per cent, it had dropped to 18 per cent in 2014. That meant that only 18 per cent of the Palestinian economy was productive, while the remaining service-centred economy was dependent on Israel. Moreover, Palestinians were denied access to 61 per cent of the West Bank (Area C) under Israeli control. Israel extracted 82 per cent of the water of the West Bank, above what had been agreed in the Oslo Accords. Palestinians were consequently forced to import 50 per cent of their own water from Israel. Only 35 per cent of irrigable Palestinian land was in fact irrigated, further contributing to the decline of the agricultural sector.

25. Had full policy space been granted to the State of Palestine, the increase in the country's GDP would have been 25 per cent; the difference between that

figure and the actual rate of growth represented the true cost of the occupation. Between 2000 and 2015, the Palestinian economy had lost approximately \$8.4 billion, or twice the size of its current economy, on account of the blockade. Between 2000 and 2005, the country had lost one third of its productive basis; between 1967 and 2016, 2.5 million productive trees had been burnt or uprooted, entailing a 25 per cent decrease in the sector's production. Fishing had been limited to the area within six miles of the shore, as opposed to the 20 miles provided for in the Oslo Accords.

26. The UNCTAD report marked the first time that the international community and the United Nations system had stressed the importance of keeping a systematic and evidence-based record of the cost of occupation. He recommended extending a new mandate to UNCTAD to report on an annual basis on the cost of occupation until the occupation was ended, including retroactive reviews. The report had been completed without programme budget implications in 2016 but future reports would have budget implications of approximately \$60,000 to \$70,000 for translation into all official languages.

27. The State of Palestine could not currently take advantage of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He urged the Committee to allow UNCTAD to use the funds allocated for the Agenda to continue providing reports on the cost of occupation.

28. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that documenting the cost of the occupation was an important exercise, as compensation would be a critical issue when negotiating a peaceful settlement with the Occupying Authority. Practical measures must be taken to keep the exercise alive and allow UNCTAD to provide an annual report.

29. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that the work of UNCTAD on the cost of occupation was a crucial exercise that should be continued. The international community had a responsibility to ensure that Palestine became a sovereign and independent State capable of implementing the 2030 Agenda. It was therefore important to calculate the cost of occupation, in order to be able to obtain reparations for all that the Palestinians had lost over decades. Her delegation would support any resolution that furthered the work of UNCTAD on the subject.

30. **Mr. Rosario** (Cuba) said that, as the occupation had very intense moral, ethical, political and economic costs, it was critical that UNCTAD should continue to provide regular information on the costs of the occupation. The State of Palestine should also be empowered to implement the 2030 Agenda.

31. **Mr. Elkhafif** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that reversing the occupation, in part by clearly assessing the cost of occupation in all economic sectors, was the first step towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Other matters

32. **The Chair** said that the New York session of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government would start on 17 October 2016. In addition, the special meeting of the Committee in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People would be held on 29 November 2016; he urged delegations to be represented at the ambassadorial level.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.