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later: Mr. Islam (Vice-Chair) (Bangladesh)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 61: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/67/91-E/2012/13 and A/67/358-S/2012/690)

1. **Mr. Khouri** (Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), introducing the Commission's report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, covering the period from 30 March 2011 to 29 March 2012 (A/67/91-E/2012/13), said that Israeli measures affecting Palestinians were increasingly being viewed as institutional and systemic rather than ad hoc. Palestinians, including children, continued to be incarcerated, injured and killed.

2. In violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), Israel had stepped up its policy of demolishing Palestinian homes. Approximately 25,500 structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had been demolished since 1967, and the number of displaced Palestinians was increasing. In contravention of international law, Israel continued to establish new settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israeli seizure of land threatened the contiguity of the Territory and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. In particular, it continued the construction of a 708-km-long wall, which annexed some of the West Bank's most fertile land and severed East Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian Territory. Palestinians' mobility in the West Bank was restricted, and the blockade of the Gaza Strip continued. In June 2012, more than 50 international organizations, including United Nations bodies, had called for an immediate end to the blockade, to no avail.

3. In violation of international law, Israel not only denied Palestinians access to their natural resources, but also polluted and depleted those resources. Palestinians lived with a shortage of water, with warnings that within 15 years Gaza would have no drinkable water, largely due to Israeli overpumping of

groundwater. Illegal Israeli mining continued, as did the dumping of industrial waste in the Occupied Territory, polluting land and damaging crops.

4. Economic and human development remained stalled as a result of Israeli policies, with high levels of unemployment in the Occupied Territory. Gazans were the worst affected owing to the blockade, and 80 per cent were dependent on international aid for sustenance. Stress-related disorders and signs of psychological trauma were widespread.

5. Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan also persisted, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Its de facto annexation policies continued, as did systematic discrimination against Syrian Arab citizens, in favour of the 19,000 illegal Israeli settlers. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Syrian territory was illegal, politically and economically unsustainable, and morally indefensible. The international community had a duty to uphold international law, end the occupation of Palestinian and Syrian lands and restore the rights of the Palestinian people.

6. **Mr. Lakhal** (Tunisia) said that occupied peoples could not achieve lasting development unless they had control over their natural resources. He asked whether a practical solution could be reached within the framework of discussions on the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

7. **Mr. Khouri** (Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA) said that the ownership and sustainable use of natural resources were indeed rights. Integrated regional management of resources for sustainable development was an approach that had emerged at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which very much tied into the Palestinian question. The process of returning Palestine's natural resources to its people would be undertaken through existing development programmes.

8. **Mr. AlHantouli** (Observer for Palestine) said that for decades the Palestinian people had suffered from the ongoing Israeli occupation and the killing of civilians, arbitrary arrests, land confiscations, destruction of property and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, all of which undermined the Palestinian economy. The construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and of the apartheid annexation wall, continued military aggression and restrictions on movement were altering

the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Water resources were being depleted and deteriorating in quality.

9. Each year during the olive harvest season there was a marked increase in Israeli attacks on Palestinian farmers. Olive cultivation and the olive oil industry accounted for approximately 14 per cent of gross agricultural income in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to the most recent reports, Israelis had destroyed more than 8,000 olive trees since the start of 2012. Israel denied the Palestinian agricultural sector its vital economic role not only by preventing access to agricultural land and water, but also by depriving farmers of access to local and foreign markets. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had found that the Palestinian economy was denied access to 40 per cent of the land and 82 per cent of the groundwater in the West Bank. Israel exploited more than 90 per cent of Palestinian water resources for its exclusive use. Average water consumption in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was 70 litres per capita per day, below the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization (100 litres per day), and well below the average in Israel of 300 litres per capita per day.

10. Israel's continued blockade of Gaza hindered the movement of imports, exports and persons. Palestinian farmers were denied access to more than 35 per cent of the area of the Gaza Strip, and Palestinian fishermen were denied access to more than 85 per cent of Palestinian fishing waters; consequently, over 44 per cent of the Occupied Palestinian Territory's population lacked food security. The blockade prevented the implementation of necessary water projects, leading to a worsening humanitarian crisis.

11. The States Members of the United Nations should hold Israel to account for its contravention of international law. South Africa had decided that imported products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements should be labelled as such, so that consumers could choose not to support the occupation. He hoped that other countries would adopt similar measures.

12. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that Israel, the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, was continuing to implement brutal and arbitrary measures

that caused great suffering among the Palestinian and Syrian inhabitants of those territories. Those measures were in flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, and of hundreds of United Nations resolutions. The Israeli occupation, the ongoing construction and expansion of illegal settlements and Israel's inhumane closure policies were preventing sustainable development, exacerbating an already grave humanitarian crisis and deepening poverty. Palestinians were deprived of their natural resources, including land and water, and were denied basic services, employment and access to markets. Israel also severely restricted Palestinians' freedom of movement, the movement of goods and the provision of humanitarian assistance, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

13. Israel was exploiting and depleting the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan and dumping toxic and nuclear waste in those territories. That waste posed a serious risk to the health of people living there. Ongoing illegal land confiscations by Israel were depriving Arabs of more and more of their land. Furthermore, Israel was systematically demolishing homes in Jerusalem with a view to altering the city's demographic composition, and was using bulldozers to excavate under the city's holy sites in an attempt to change their legal status.

14. Israel was continuing to build a separation wall, in clear contravention of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, in which the Assembly acknowledged the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued on 9 July 2004. That wall, 87 per cent of which was being constructed within the West Bank, also cut off Palestinian farmers' access to their land and water resources. The Israeli occupation authorities were, moreover, extracting water from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan to supply illegal settlements and, in the occupied Golan, sold water to Syrian farmers at much higher cost than to settlers. Israel also continued to uproot trees and deny building permits to Syrians and Palestinians.

15. Economic and social life in the Arab territories occupied by Israel was being systematically destroyed. The Arab inhabitants of those territories were being deprived of their fundamental rights, as provided under international instruments, and were unable to exercise sovereignty over their natural resources. The international community should make every effort to

compel Israel to meet its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel should, moreover, award damages to the inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan to compensate them for the damage and suffering it had caused.

16. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia) said that, as a member of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, he had participated in that Committee's July 2012 mission to Gaza and had witnessed first-hand the devastating social and economic impact of the occupation. In Gaza, Palestinian fishermen's and farmers' livelihoods had been ruined by the blockade. Israel had imposed arbitrary limits on fishing areas and catches, and its bulldozers had destroyed farmers' land and equipment in the buffer zone. Imports to Gaza remained at less than 50 per cent of pre-blockade levels. Construction materials were desperately needed to build homes for those whose houses had been destroyed by the Israeli military, and to build schools, which were in short supply. The blockade imposed collective punishment on some 1.6 million Palestinians.

17. Israel should return full control over their natural resources to Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The United Nations development system should strengthen its assistance, and countries able to do so should provide adequate and predictable financial assistance so that United Nations development agencies could more effectively support the Palestinian Authority and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel should end its occupation in order to pave the way for a two-State solution that would ensure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

18. **Mr. Al-Naqbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the ESCWA report (A/67/91-E/2012/13) clearly indicated that actions by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan had caused a sharp deterioration in Palestinians' living conditions. Closure policies and harsh restrictions on people's movement prevented them from reaching their places of employment or meeting their basic needs. Unemployment had risen sharply, particularly among young people, and malnutrition remained widespread.

Moreover, Israeli air raids and military incursions in Gaza had killed and injured a large number of civilians, including many women and children.

19. Israel had refused to comply with numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling upon it to cease all construction of illegal settlements and of the separation wall. Despite repeated condemnations by the international community, Israel continued to confiscate and destroy agricultural land and property belonging to Arabs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and to expand its settlements. Furthermore, in clear violation of international instruments, Israel was attempting to alter the cultural, religious and demographic character of Jerusalem. Israel was undermining the very foundations of any future Palestinian State and had blocked regional and international efforts to resume peace negotiations. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel was continuing to confiscate Arab property and exploit natural resources, despite international resolutions and decisions affirming that its annexation of that territory was null and void.

20. The United Arab Emirates reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people, whose inalienable right to self-determination and to sovereignty over its natural resources must be upheld. It called for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, and fully supported Palestine's application for membership of the United Nations and Syria's right to recover the occupied Syrian Golan. The international community should ensure that Israel fully complied with its obligations under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel should end its aggressive policies, lift its blockade on the Gaza Strip, cease settlement construction and demolish its separation wall. The international community and financial institutions should, moreover, ensure that the Palestinian Authority received adequate funding.

21. *Mr. Islam (Bangladesh), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

22. **Ms. Al-Busaidi** (Oman) said that United Nations resolutions affirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people must be upheld. Oman was working with other Arab countries and the wider international community to facilitate a resumption of negotiations

between the Palestinians and Israelis. The international community and the United Nations should uphold their commitments towards the Palestinian people so that it, like all other peoples, could exercise its right to self-determination, and could establish an independent State on the basis of the 1967 borders. Oman fully supported Palestine's application for membership of the United Nations.

23. There was no doubt that Israel's ongoing occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the occupied Syrian Golan and parts of Lebanese territory undermined international peace and security and entrenched feelings of anger and hatred across the region. The plight of peoples suffering under occupation could no longer be ignored. It was, moreover, illogical that while Israel was uprooting trees and preventing farmers from gathering their crops, the international community was striving to protect forests and ensure food security. A just and comprehensive solution must be found to the Palestinian issue so that Palestinians could enjoy decent lives and exercise permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. If the international community refused to speak out against certain Israeli policies and actions, it would merely encourage Israel's intransigence in refusing to comply with international law.

24. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that Israel's policies revealed that it considered itself above the rule of law. The socioeconomic consequences of its occupation were grave; the fact that basic infrastructure was unavailable and basic needs were denied in the occupied territories was indicative of malice rather than neglect. Israel should be compelled by the international community to abide by international law and United Nations resolutions. The only available avenue for achieving social harmony, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development was through legally established statehood and formal international recognition of the State of Palestine. His Government supported the Palestinian Authority and the right of the Palestinian people to its natural resources, and believed wholeheartedly in a two-State solution. Security for Israel could be achieved only through respect for human rights and the rule of law. The United Nations should continue to promote permanent peace based on fair partnership and equality between peoples.

25. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, although the United Nations had adopted dozens of resolutions in which it had affirmed the sovereignty of the Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan and the Palestinians over their natural resources, Israel and Israeli settler militias continued to exploit the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan and occupied Palestine and to prevent Syrians and Palestinians from exercising their rights. Israel ensured that only settlers benefited from the natural resources of those territories, and, by means of ongoing confiscations of Arab land, was continuing its settlement expansion policy. Occupation forces and settlers had set fire to rare forests and uprooted olive and fruit trees near Syrian villages and on land adjacent to the ceasefire line, with a view to depriving Syrian villagers of what was often their sole source of income. In collaboration with Israeli and Western companies, the occupation forces were also confiscating land from Syrian villages and pressuring their inhabitants to leave so that wind farms could be constructed. The occupying Power continued to kill and intimidate innocent civilians and had committed a number of massacres in the occupied Syrian Golan, including two that it had perpetrated at the ceasefire line in 2011, which had resulted in the deaths of 27 people. Furthermore, Israel's policy of burying nuclear and chemical waste in the occupied Syrian Golan seriously threatened the delicate ecology of that area.

26. Those inhuman and immoral practices demonstrated Israel's lack of respect for international norms and instruments. Like all other peoples, Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan and Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had a right to sustainable development. Such development could not, however, be achieved under a brutal Israeli occupation. While calling for human rights to be upheld, certain countries continued to turn a blind eye to persistent Israeli human rights violations. Those countries should reconsider their positions, which encouraged State-sponsored terrorism. All Member States should, moreover, take into consideration the dozens of United Nations reports that had underlined that the ongoing Israeli occupation was the key obstacle that prevented Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan and the Palestinians from achieving their development goals.

27. **Mr. Al Otaibi** (Saudi Arabia) said that the Palestinian people would be unable to enjoy sovereignty over its natural resources while the Israeli

occupation authorities continued to implement measures to deplete those resources and to alter the geography and demographics of Palestinian lands. In that connection, United Nations reports had repeatedly highlighted flagrant Israeli violations and had underscored how Arabs continued to suffer as a result of arbitrary Israeli practices and policies. Restrictions imposed by Israel on Syrians in the occupied Golan and on Palestinians, together with ongoing settlement expansion and the construction of the separation wall, had resulted in low productivity, low pay levels and high unemployment. In turn, that had caused widespread poverty and food insecurity. Arabs were denied adequate access to water resources, and water quality was deteriorating. Furthermore, although financial reforms had been implemented by the Palestinian Authority, the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was becoming increasingly fragile and debt levels were rising. All those factors made inclusive and sustainable development even more difficult to achieve.

28. Saudi Arabia, an active participant in all peace negotiations to resolve the Palestinian issue, had proposed the Arab Peace Initiative, which had been adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States in 2002. The international community and the United Nations should uphold the Palestinian people's inalienable right to sovereignty over its natural resources, as well as its right to compensation for the harm it had suffered as a result, inter alia, of the occupying Power's exploitation of those resources. Saudi Arabia urged the international community to compel Israel to abide by all its obligations under international law, including, in particular, international humanitarian and human rights law, and to desist from all actions that were detrimental to the environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan.

29. **Mr. Khalil** (Egypt) said that the ESCWA report (A/67/91-E/2012/13) underscored the extent to which the Palestinian and Syrian peoples continued to suffer as a result of Israel's arbitrary measures and policies, which constituted flagrant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and contravened numerous United Nations resolutions. In addition to providing details on the numbers of Palestinians who had been arrested, injured and killed by the occupation authorities during the reporting period, that report drew attention to the increase in the number of settler attacks

against Palestinians and of Israeli roadblocks in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority was facing a grave financial crisis as it struggled to meet its payroll in a context of falling tax receipts and sharply curtailed foreign investment. Poverty and food insecurity were increasingly widespread, and the health and education systems were deteriorating rapidly. Meanwhile, Israel's ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip constituted a form of collective punishment against its inhabitants.

30. Palestinians and Syrians living under Israeli occupation did not have adequate access to water resources because of the occupying Power's discriminatory policies and because the construction of the separation wall had destroyed watercourses and irrigation systems. That wall, almost 90 per cent of which was being built in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, constituted a blatant violation of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 and followed a route that had been designed to ensure that water sources and large areas of fertile land would fall on the Israeli side and would therefore become inaccessible to Palestinian farmers.

31. Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan contravened the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, under which an occupying Power was obliged to safeguard the natural resources of the occupied country and to use those resources to address the needs of that country's native inhabitants.

32. Israel's actions were undermining any hope that Syrians and Palestinians living under occupation could achieve sustainable development. The world must not stand idly by in the face of the humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis they were suffering. The Committee should strive to draw greater attention to their plight, and should reaffirm that they, like all other peoples, should enjoy their legitimate rights, including the right to sustainable development. Egypt called upon all Member States to support the draft resolution that would be submitted under agenda item 61.

33. **Mr. Aloumi** (Kuwait) said that the Israeli occupation not only cut the Palestinian economy off from the rest of the world, but also economically isolated individual cities, villages and camps within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel's actions were intended to Judaize the West Bank and East Jerusalem so as to take control of the city and of areas rich in natural resources. Its expansion of illegal settlements

violated the Fourth Geneva Convention and demonstrated that it had no intention of cooperating with the international community to achieve peace. It continued to deprive the Palestinian people of water rights and food security and to commit environmental violations that created health hazards. In Gaza, the ongoing blockade imposed collective punishment on the population, in violation of article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

34. The international community should pressure Israel to acknowledge the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the 1967 borders. Israel should end its occupation of all Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, and should cease its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty.

35. **Ms. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that, although economic development in Palestine was a key priority, the particular circumstances of the Occupied Palestinian Territory affected how development initiatives were formulated and implemented. Many obstacles had impeded efforts to promote development. The weakening Palestinian economy, and the harsh conditions in which people lived, had increased a sense of uncertainty, eroded incomes and exacerbated food insecurity. Revenue received by the Palestinian Authority had contracted by 2.2 per cent during the first quarter of 2012, and the Palestinian trade deficit for that year was expected to reach \$4 billion. Economists predicted that Palestinian economic activity would remain subdued for a number of reasons, including restrictions placed on people's movement and on their access to cropland and pasture land. Moreover, the new roads that were fragmenting agricultural land, the removal of tree cover from large areas and the destruction wrought by bulldozers were threatening biodiversity and causing grave environmental damage that would take many years to repair.

36. In the light of the particular circumstances in Palestine, stakeholders should adopt a comprehensive approach to development that addressed all fields of economic activity. Action should be taken to foster self-reliance, promote inclusive and stable development and strengthen the Palestinian economy so that it could meet people's basic needs. To that end, the international community should shoulder its responsibilities and continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people.

37. **Mr. Lakhal** (Tunisia) said that his country would continue to support all efforts to ensure that the Palestinian people enjoyed its legitimate and inalienable rights, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Tunisia also supported all efforts to end the occupation of the Syrian Golan.

38. Numerous United Nations reports had documented the grave economic and social impact of Israel's occupation on the living conditions of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories. Occupation and settlement-building were incompatible with sustainable development. The increasing pace of illegal settlement construction, more frequent acts of settler violence against Arabs, the ongoing construction of the separation wall on Palestinian land, the destruction of property and the expropriation and destruction of natural resources were exacerbating people's suffering and undermining regional peace and security.

39. As agriculture was the backbone of the Palestinian economy, the international community should take action to ensure that Palestinians were compensated for the negative impacts of Israeli policies on that sector. Efforts should also be made to promote agricultural products from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan and to rehabilitate degraded agricultural land. Countries also needed to raise awareness among their citizens of the reasons why they should refrain from buying products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements.

40. The international community should meet its humanitarian responsibilities towards the men, women and children living under Israeli occupation to ensure that they enjoyed permanent sovereignty over their natural resources and achieved sustainable development. Tunisia called upon donors to step up the financial assistance they provided to that end, and pledged its full support to the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations specialized agencies working to alleviate people's suffering in the occupied Syrian Golan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

41. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia) said that natural resources were critical to sustainable and equitable growth and that foreign occupation was an obstacle to the right to development. Israel continued to limit Palestinians' access to their natural resources, thereby limiting development prospects in the areas under occupation.

International contributions were needed to support Palestinians' right to development and to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. Indonesia was supporting capacity-building programmes that trained Palestinians in various fields, and was open to collaborating on further similar programmes with partner countries. A two-State solution involving the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital was viable and achievable, and would provide a basis for the resolution of other problems in the Middle East.

42. **Mr. Jiménez** (Nicaragua) said that the occupation economy affecting all areas of Palestinians' lives, especially in the Gaza Strip, as well as ongoing attacks by the Israeli military, made it impossible for Palestinians to focus on development. Nicaragua, which had also suffered from foreign aggression and occupation at different times in its history, reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's struggle for an independent and sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

43. The first step towards sustainable economic development for the Palestinian people was to enforce United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to recognize the self-determination and sovereignty of that people and to allow the return of Palestinian refugees to the territory that had historically belonged to them. Nicaragua condemned Israel's violations of international law. With its expansionist and genocidal policies, it had made State terrorism a way of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee should continue to put pressure on Israel to recognize Palestinian rights and to cease its destructive practices. It should also continue to support peace negotiations and Palestine's legitimate right to become a State Member of the United Nations.

44. **Mr. Al Seedi** (Iraq) said that the long-term prospects for socioeconomic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had deteriorated. Restrictions on movement and aid flows, and the ongoing financial crisis, had exacerbated hardships, reduced people's purchasing power and hampered efforts by the Palestinian Authority to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, Israel was continuing its efforts to fragment Palestinian land and demolish Palestinian homes with a view to expanding its illegal settlements, particularly in areas surrounding East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

45. The Palestinian Authority was unable to meet its financial obligations and address the chronic economic and humanitarian crisis because many taxes it was owed had been diverted to Israel. The Palestinian Ministry of the Economy had estimated that the occupation had cost the Palestinian economy \$9.6 billion, or 82 per cent of Palestine's gross national product in 2011. Exports and imports had been severely curtailed and economic stagnation was undermining social cohesion and efforts to establish the institutions required for an independent Palestinian State.

46. At the thirteenth session of UNCTAD, member States had emphasized the importance of economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Statistics clearly showed that the policies pursued by the Israeli occupation authorities had severely curtailed economic activity and that the impact of those policies far outweighed the mitigating effects of measures adopted by the Palestinian Authority. The occupation had had a particularly devastating impact on Palestinian agriculture, which was the cornerstone of the Palestinian economy and of any future two-State solution. The increasing socioeconomic difficulties faced by Palestinians were being compounded by the occupying Power's disproportionate use of force and arbitrary detention, in addition to its policies of settlement expansion, property destruction and land closure. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the closure of crossing points to Syria was one of the key impediments to socioeconomic development.

47. Despite the goodwill demonstrated by many Arab countries in connection with efforts to achieve a just peace in the region, deliberate Israeli policies that caused great suffering among the people living under its occupation remained the main stumbling-block to achieving a solution. No peaceful resolution to the conflict and no meaningful development could occur while Israel continued its stranglehold on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and continued to kill unarmed Palestinians, including children.

48. Iraq called upon Israel to end its occupation, comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions and agree to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

49. **Ms. Al-Khater** (Qatar) said that the illegal actions perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians demonstrated that it wished to destroy any chance of

achieving peace in the region on the basis of the two-State solution and the principle of land for peace. Israel's determination to continue settlement construction was a key factor that was aggravating the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In violation of international law, Israel had confiscated 40 per cent of the West Bank and, between 2011 and 2012, had increased the pace of settlement-building by 20 per cent. It had also destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and hundreds of Palestinian homes in order to expand its settlements.

50. By dumping toxic waste and uprooting trees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel was seriously threatening the sustainability of the Territory's natural resources. Furthermore, the excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, restrictions on people's movement, the harsh blockade on Gaza and the construction of an apartheid wall were depriving Palestinians of their fundamental rights, included the right to a decent standard of living, the right to benefit from their natural resources and the right to own property. Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan were also denied access to their water resources. Israel was burying toxic waste in that territory and continuing its campaign of land confiscation. As victims of entrenched discrimination, Arabs also found it difficult to obtain building permits.

51. By refusing to comply with United Nations resolutions, Israel was undermining the Organization's effectiveness. It was only by complying with those resolutions that Israel could demonstrate its commitment to finding a comprehensive and just solution to the crisis.

52. **Mr. Mashabane** (South Africa) said that Palestine's economic development potential was being destroyed by the Israeli occupation. Half the Palestinian population was classified as poor, and its economy was overwhelmingly dependent on Israel. The Palestinian people could not realize its development aspirations without greater capture of trade revenue by the Palestinian authorities. The Palestinian people's struggle had long been important for South Africa. Funding for socioeconomic needs and for human and institutional capacity-building should be increased so as to pave the way for the establishment of a Palestinian State. The mandates of United Nations agencies with respect to the Palestinian people should be expanded and strengthened, commensurate with the needs of the people and economy. In addition, Palestine

should have the right to represent itself in all United Nations entities.

53. South Africa firmly opposed the blockade of Gaza and supported efforts to find a just solution with respect to the right of return of Palestinian refugees. The South African Government continued to engage in various forms of cooperation with and support for the Palestinian people and had been proactive in ensuring policy coherence in that regard, inter alia by banning, since May 2012, the mislabelling of products originating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as having originated in Israel, thereby enabling consumers to make informed choices. All Member States should, to the extent of their capacities, implement measures to support the Palestinian people.

54. **Mr. Souissi** (Morocco) said that his country fully supported all efforts to ensure that the Palestinian people enjoyed permanent sovereignty over its natural resources. It was of crucial importance that the Second Committee should continue to address that issue in its deliberations.

55. **Ms. Ben-Dor** (Israel) said that the item under consideration had no place on the Second Committee agenda. Its repeated inclusion belied the Committee's ostensible impartiality, and gave precedence to the whims of anti-Israel States over more pressing and relevant international concerns. Outstanding issues between Palestine and Israel should be negotiated directly between the two parties, outside the United Nations system.

56. The ESCWA report was one-sided, inaccurate and unhelpful, and reduced the cause of Palestinian self-determination to an attempt to denigrate Israel. It failed to mention the repressive Hamas terrorist regime in Gaza or the rockets fired by that regime onto Israeli cities, for example. Despite such attacks, Israel continued to ensure that humanitarian aid, medicines and goods reached Gaza's inhabitants. It also supported the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which, despite its mandate, had implemented less than 10 per cent of the projects approved by Israel since the beginning of 2011. In addition to firing tens of thousands of rockets into Israel, killing hundreds of Israeli civilians, Hamas brutally repressed any internal dissent within Gaza. A September 2012 Human Rights Watch report mentioned 147 allegations of torture by Hamas police in 2011, but those violations of

Palestinian human rights were not included in the ESCWA report.

57. The representative of Syria had no right to attack Israel, given the crimes of the murderous Syrian regime. Development was the responsibility of the Palestinian authorities themselves; the assumption that peace was a prerequisite for development, apparently held by various representatives who had spoken, was invalid. Israel was prepared to share its knowledge and experience with its neighbours and to work with the international community on the issues entrusted to the Second Committee. It hoped that, in future, the Committee's meetings would be entirely devoted to the realization of common goals.

58. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli delegation's objection to the Committee's discussion of the current agenda item was an attempt to divert attention from the atrocious crimes against humanity being committed by Israeli occupation forces. Residents of the Syrian Golan were prevented from using their natural resources, which were appropriated by settler militias. Practices such as the destruction of agricultural land prevented Syrians from realizing their right to development. Precise information about the social, economic and humanitarian suffering in the occupied Syrian Golan was lacking because the occupation authorities denied access to investigative organizations. In the light of the inhumane Israeli occupation, the Israeli representative had no right to speak of human rights or sustainable development.

59. **Ms. Ben-Dor** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Second Committee had overstepped its mandate in discussing the occupation. The representative of Syria had no right to discuss the protection of natural resources, when the regime he represented was murdering and torturing its own women and children. Future generations were a country's greatest natural resource.

60. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Syria was witnessing terrorism that was similar to Israeli terrorism. Israel should set an example by ending the decades-long occupation and restoring the rights enshrined in international law to those under its occupation.

61. **Mr. AlHantouli** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it

was regrettable that the Israeli delegation appeared not to understand what had been discussed, and had represented Israel as a target of attack, while in fact it was Israel that had attacked Palestine daily for 45 years. Israel must end the occupation. It used Palestinian natural resources for the development of technology which it then tried to sell as its own. Despite over 20 years of negotiations, Israeli forces continued the occupation and expanded settlements. UNRWA was currently raising objections to Israeli practices in a Fourth Committee meeting. Israel's questioning of the credibility of the Second Committee in the light of its consideration of the current agenda item was unjustified; the Committee displayed its impartiality by allowing a country such as Israel to present its views.

62. **Mr. Momeni** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that all Palestinians should be granted the right of return and should be able to vote on their nation's future. The only viable solution was a democratic one.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.