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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Abudu-Birresborn (Vice-Chair) (Ghana)

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In the absence of Mr. Amorín (Uruguay), Mr. Abudu-Birresborn (Ghana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 59: 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 (*continued*) (A/78/127-E/2023/95)

1. **Mr. Meschchanov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation condemned continued Israeli settlement activity and the denial by Israel, the occupying Power, of access by Palestinians to their own lands. The recent massive casualties among Israeli and Palestinian civilians were the result of the systematic violation by Israel of United Nations resolutions and the monopolization of the Middle East peace process by the United States, which offered empty promises of Palestinian economic prosperity instead of genuine progress towards a two-State solution with an independent State of Palestine within the 1967 borders.

2. His delegation was concerned about the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. It called for an end to the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, the swift provision of unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, the release of hostages and the opening of humanitarian corridors so that assistance could be provided to civilians. The only path to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East was through compliance with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

3. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that his delegation unequivocally condemned the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel. More Israelis had been killed on 7 October 2023 than on any other day since Israel had become a State. The previous 11 days had also seen more Palestinians killed than in any previous conflict with Israel. Canada would continue to call on all parties to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law. It would also continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas.

4. Given the ongoing violence, he regretted that the Committee was once again discussing the agenda item on 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. For many years, Canada had been pointing out that the unbalanced focus on Israel in the General Assembly resolutions generated by that agenda item was unhelpful to the cause of peace. It was unfortunate that the text had not

been updated to reflect the negative impact of Hamas on natural resources in the West Bank and Gaza, not to mention the loss of life caused by Hamas, which did not represent the Palestinian people or its aspirations. The Israeli and Palestinian peoples had the right to live in peace and security with dignity and without fear. Reprising debates and resolutions that had not changed in decades would do little to bring Israelis and Palestinians any closer to peace or security.

5. **Mr. Al-amri** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 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 (A/78/127-E/2023/95) had documented ongoing Israeli practices that were in flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law and dozens of United Nations resolutions.

6. The Israeli occupation was the chief cause of poverty in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israeli closures, checkpoints and restrictions on movement prevented Palestinians from making use of their natural resources and hindered development. The Israeli economic blockade amounted to collective punishment. Israeli land confiscation, home demolition and settlement policies were in violation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Israel was depleting water resources at an unsustainable rate to supply its illegal settlements and then selling the surplus back to the rightful original owners from whom it had been stolen. Israel was trying to change the status quo in Jerusalem and violating the sanctity of Muslim and Christian holy places. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel was building settlements on the ruins of Syrian villages and land belonging to Syrian farmers.

7. He wished to draw the Committee's attention to resolution 8987 of the League of Arab States, adopted by an emergency session of the Council of the League at the ministerial level on 11 October 2023, and the call transmitted by the Council to the Secretary-General to stop the genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

8. The League called also on the international community to end the injustice being perpetrated against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Syrian people in the occupied Syrian Golan by taking action to bring about an end to the occupation, create an independent Palestinian State, compensate for the damages incurred under the

occupation and restore the occupied people's rights to their natural resources.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

9. **Ms. Nasser-Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Israeli representative's statement of the previous day had yet again failed to address the root cause of the conflict, which was the violations perpetrated against the entire Palestinian civilian population on a daily basis during over 56 years of occupation. International law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, should be upheld without selectivity or double standards.

10. Thus far, Israeli strikes on Gaza had killed and injured 3,000 and 10,000 Palestinians, respectively, the overwhelming majority of whom were civilians, including more than 1,000 children. Some 47 families had been wiped out entirely. More than 1,000 people were still missing under the rubble. Some 1 million had been internally displaced with nowhere to go and were living in increasingly dire conditions without clean drinking water or sanitation. Hospitals were running out of fuel, putting the lives of thousands of patients at risk.

11. Meanwhile, Israeli settlers in the West Bank were taking advantage of the situation in Gaza to conduct barbaric attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. At least two Palestinian villages had been entirely depopulated. What right to self-defence allowed civilians to be massacred? Were Palestinians lesser human beings? She called on the Member States to reject the collective punishment, dehumanization and war crimes being perpetrated against her people, and stressed that only recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an end to the occupation could lead to a viable and just peace between Palestine and Israel.

12. **Mr. Ben Naftali** (Israel) said that for the Palestinian representative to criticize Israel without condemning Hamas could only mean that she supported terrorists breaking into people's homes, massacring them in their beds and abducting children and mothers. She had not mentioned Hamas once. She was asking for outrage now, but where had her outrage been when Israelis were being butchered? Was Jewish blood so cheap?

13. His country was unique in the trouble that it took to warn civilians to evacuate before an attack. Thousands of Gazan civilians had in fact found refuge. But Hamas was blocking roads to prevent civilians from evacuating so that it could use them as human shields.

During the previous week, Hamas had stolen fuel from United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities that would have been sufficient to power gas, water and desalinization plants for six days. Hamas did not care about the people of Gaza. Ignoring the responsibility of Hamas for Gazan suffering did nothing to bolster the Palestinian Authority's moral authority.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.