



PERMANENT
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Statement by Mr. Rabii Al Hantouli, First Secretary, Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, before the Second Committee on 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", 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 6 November 2012:

(Please check against delivery):

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to extend once again, on behalf of Palestine, our sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of the Chair of this Committee, as well as to the distinguished members of the Bureau. I wish also to thank the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), for preparing and introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "*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/67/91-E/2012/13).

The report that was just introduced reflects the harsh reality and continued injustice from which the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, have been suffering for more than 45 years, while the international community stands helpless vis-à-vis the occupying Power, which considers itself above all laws and continues its violations of international law and all relevant UN resolutions by continuing the killing of Palestinian civilians, arbitrary arrests, land confiscation, destruction of property, including agricultural land and water wells, demolition of houses and the imposition of severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, all of which undermine the Palestinian economy as a whole.

The construction and expansion of Israeli settlements, the construction of the apartheid annexation Wall, the continued Israeli military aggression against our people, and the closures regime are altering the character, status and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and depriving the Palestinian people of their right to access and use their natural resources, namely water, land and energy, in addition to the negative impact on the environment, through the depletion of water resources and the deterioration of their level of quality.

Mr. Chairman,

The reports issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory confirm that construction of Israeli settlements has

continued and that the attacks waged by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian people and their property, including agricultural land and water sources, have doubled. The Israeli attacks have systematically escalated and settlers are viciously waging their barbaric and brutal raids on Palestinian farmers, under the protection of the occupying forces, uprooting trees, stealing crops and flooding farmland with wastewater.

In these days of every year we witness a marked, deliberate increase in Israeli attacks against Palestinian farmers, as these days mark the olive harvest season. The cultivation of olives and the olive oil industry constitute about 14% of gross agricultural income in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and support nearly 100,000 families. In addition, this season is considered a major economic, social and cultural occasion for the Palestinian people. According to the latest reports, the Israeli occupying forces and settlers uprooted, burned and destroyed more than 8,000 olive trees since the beginning of this year alone.

The agricultural sector represents the cornerstone of the sustainability of the Palestinian economy, however, this sector is deprived of the capacity to play its strategic role, because of Israeli practices of expropriation of land, preventing Palestinian farmers' access to agricultural areas and water resources, as well as access to local and foreign markets to sell their products and buy the inputs of production. This is what the latest report issued by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has indicated, adding that the Palestinian economy is deprived of access to 40% of the West Bank, and 82% of groundwater.

In this regard, we would like to recall that Israel, the occupying Power, is currently exploiting more than 90% of Palestinian water resources for its exclusive use, including for use in Israeli settlements. Israel is allocating less than 10% of these resources for Palestinian use. As a result, the average water consumption in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is 70 liters only per capita per day, which is below the minimum level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) which is 100 liters per person per day, and is much less than the average 300 liters per capita per day in Israel.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel, the occupying Power, continues its illegal, inhumane blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, which prevents the movement of imports and exports as well as the movement of persons. Israel also continues to deny Palestinian farmers' access to more than 35% of the area of the Gaza Strip, and continues to prevent Palestinian fishermen from reaching the areas located more than three miles from the shore, preventing them from exploiting more than 85% of the Palestinian fishing waters, which has led to a worsening of living conditions in Gaza, where more than 44% of its population lacks food security.

In addition, the Israeli blockade continues to impede the implementation of the necessary water projects, leading to the creation of a catastrophic aqueous reality and worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The UN report on the Gaza Strip, issued in August 2012, details this harsh reality and also paints a bleak picture for the future if the situation continues as it is.

Mr. Chairman,

In light of ongoing illegal Israeli policies and practices, we call upon Member States of the United Nations and the international community as a whole to carry out their responsibilities, with deeds not just words, to bind Israel, the occupying Power, to implement the provisions of international law and conventions and relevant resolutions and to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people, and the rights of the Arab people in the occupied Syrian Golan, to sovereignty over their natural resources and stop their depletion and exploitation.

We emphasize that our international system as a whole will lose credibility if it continues to allow Israel, the occupying Power, to continue its illegal policies and practices without accountability. In this regard, we thank those countries that have begun taking action nationally and regionally to send serious messages to the occupying Power. Here we mention in particular the friendly Republic of South Africa, which recently decided to impose a distinct sign on imported products manufactured in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. This is considered to be an important step to allow the consumer a chance not to buy these products so as not to support Israeli violations of international law, including the exploitation of Palestinian land and natural resources.

From here we call on all peace-loving countries, which take international law as a principled basis for their foreign policy, to take similar measures and we are confident that by taking such steps they will contribute effectively in opening horizons to achieve a just peace based on the resolutions of international legitimacy that ensure our legitimate rights guaranteed by international norms and conventions, including our inalienable right to self-determination and the achievement of the independence of our viable and sovereign Palestinian State, including the exercise of our full sovereignty over our natural resources.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.