



UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE REFUGEES

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris
29 and 30 April 2008

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The **United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees** was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 29 and 30 April 2008. The Conference was held in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81 of 10 December 2007.
2. The objective of the Conference was to assess the present situation of Palestine refugees and examine the role of the United Nations in alleviating their plight. The Conference also examined efforts at finding an agreed, just and fair solution to the refugee issue in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions, especially resolution 194 of 1948, as a prerequisite for resolving the question of Palestine and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.
3. The Conference evaluated the progress achieved since the previous United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees organized by the Committee, held in 2000. Participants noted with grave concern that today, 60 years since the original displacement of the Palestinians as a result of the Israeli-Arab conflict of 1948, the situation of the refugees, a particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged group, which numbers over 4.5 million, remained as precarious as ever, and the problem was no closer to a solution than it had been in 2000. For six decades now and for several generations, the refugees have remained in exile away from their homes, living in overcrowded camps with inadequate facilities, facing demographic pressures, severe socio-economic constraints and, frequently, dangerous security environments.
4. The participants expressed particular alarm at the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the refugee-majority population has seen its already meagre living deteriorate further due to a crippling Israeli blockade and routine military operations. The participants called for an immediate and unconditional lifting of the Israeli sanctions imposed on the Gaza Strip. They held Israel fully responsible for the welfare and protection of the refugees in the Palestinian territory it continued to occupy, including the Gaza Strip

5. The participants also expressed their support for the rebuilding of Nahr Al Bared refugee camp which was destroyed in the summer of 2007.
6. As the participants analyzed the various practical approaches to resolving the issue, they stressed that a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem, and by extension to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole, could only be achieved in the context of their inalienable right of return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced. The participants underscored the abiding relevance of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and subsequent United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine embodying this principle, and of the Arab Peace Initiative.
7. The participants noted that the right of return of refugees, which is a fundamental and widely acknowledged humanitarian and human rights principle, did not diminish with the passage of time, and was equally applicable to the Palestinians displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities as it was to the Palestine refugees of 1948. The various refugee resettlement and compensation schemes advanced over the years only supplemented but never substituted for this inalienable right of Palestine refugees.
8. The participants examined the broader political context surrounding the refugee problem. They expressed strong support for the Israeli-Palestinian political process resumed in late 2007 at Annapolis, where the parties committed themselves to meaningful and ongoing negotiations with the intention of concluding an agreement by the end of 2008. At the same time, they expressed the view that any final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement must encompass a just and fair solution to the Palestine refugee question.
9. The participants were of the view that the United Nations should continue to exercise its permanent responsibility as a custodian of international legitimacy and uphold the rights of Palestine refugees until the question of Palestine is resolved in all its aspects. The participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important and valuable work aimed at sensitizing the international public opinion to the ongoing plight of the refugees, and for its role as a catalyst for efforts aimed at promoting a search for a just and lasting solution to the refugee issue, such as the current Conference.
10. The participants expressed their gratitude to States, intergovernmental organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, and the European Union, and to civil society organizations, which remained unwavering in their support for the refugees' rights over the years and provided material support to alleviate their conditions.
11. The participants emphasized the continuing responsibility of the United Nations and its agencies for relief and protection of Palestine refugees. The pivotal role played by UNRWA in this endeavour was particularly highlighted and emphasized. The participants noted the growing demand for UNRWA assistance and services, especially in light of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, and called on the donor community to redouble its efforts and provide vital support to meet the refugees' immediate and longer-term development needs.

12. The participants also welcomed the outcome of the Paris Donors' Conference and the generous assistance pledged by the international community to the Palestinians to underwrite the peace process and jump-start the Palestinian economy, while calling on the donors to give priority to the refugees' critical needs in that context.

13. The participants expressed appreciation to Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, for extending assistance in the preparations for the Conference, as well as for making available the conference facilities for this occasion.

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 30 April 2008