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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 29th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 4 November 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Cardi ..... (Italy)

## Contents

Agenda item 60: 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

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

**Agenda item 60: 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/69/81-E/2014/13)**

1. **Ms. Khalaf** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the 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 (A/69/81-E/2014/13). She reminded the Committee that, due to processing requirements under its mandate, the data in the report covered the period ending March 2014.

2. At its eightieth session, in 2012, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had censured Israel and urged it to prohibit and eradicate policies or practices that severely and disproportionately affected the Palestinian population. Yet discrimination in favour of Israeli settlers and de facto segregation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued, through unequal access to roads, infrastructure, basic services and mobility, as well as through the dual legal system. Moreover, restrictions on Palestinian construction, in contrast with more generous permits granted to Israeli settlers, made it virtually impossible for Palestinians to meet their housing needs, particularly in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank. As part of Israel's demographic balance policy in East Jerusalem, housing restrictions, denial of rights and discrimination in services and residential law had led to the expulsion of some 15,000 Palestinians, with an additional 93,000 at risk of becoming homeless, while 10,000 Palestinian children remained unregistered. Moreover, Israeli authorities imposed demolition fees on Palestinians, leading many to demolish their own homes to avoid such fees. Meanwhile, Israel's settlement enterprise, marked by the illegal transfer of its population into occupied territory, was tantamount to annexation. Israel had confiscated almost 40 per cent of West Bank land, and settler housing construction had more than doubled during the reporting period.

3. Mobility in the West Bank, including in and out of East Jerusalem, was also subject to a discriminatory regime that included hundreds of checkpoints, gates and physical obstacles that hindered Palestinian movement. While 68 per cent of the West Bank was effectively off-limits to Palestinians, 65 kilometres of roads had been designated for the exclusive use of Israelis. In its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice had ruled that the West Bank wall and its associated regime were contrary to international law, requiring Israel to dismantle the wall and make reparations for damage caused by its construction. Israel had yet to comply. In addition, Palestinians faced other daily obstacles and humiliations that curtailed their freedom of movement. Israel continued to maintain the blockade it had imposed on the Gaza Strip since June 2007, which amounted to the collective punishment of over 1.7 million people, and had cut Palestinians' access to 35 per cent of their farmland and their most profitable fishing areas.

4. Meanwhile, Israeli settler violence and intimidation, including racist attacks against Palestinians, their property and holy sites, were also on the rise. Yet while upwards of 90 per cent of cases of Palestinian violence were referred to court, 84 per cent of investigations into settler attacks were closed without indictments. In addition, Israel had continued its arbitrary detention of thousands of Palestinians, including children, denying their fundamental rights and employing practices that amounted to torture. Moreover, Palestinian civilians continued to be killed and injured by Israeli security forces and settlers. Amnesty International had investigated the killings of 25 Palestinians and concluded that all had been unlawful. Some had been intentional, which made them war crimes.

5. Through the blockade on the Gaza Strip and the permit regime in the West Bank, the occupation and its policies had also led to the deterioration of the Palestinian educational system by restricting the construction of new schools and the rehabilitation of existing ones. Coping mechanisms included using double shifts in Gaza and the creation of makeshift schools in the West Bank. However, Israeli settlers and soldiers continued to harass students and teachers in the West Bank on their way to or from school.

6. With respect to natural resources, Israeli policies and measures not only discriminated against

Palestinians in terms of accessing, developing and utilizing their natural resources, but also illegally depleted, endangered and polluted those resources. Israel controlled the water in the West Bank, using 90 per cent of its available water while preventing Palestinians from developing their wells or drilling new ones. Daily water consumption by Palestinians in the West Bank was significantly below the World Health Organization standard.

7. On the other hand, the restrictive permit regime in the West Bank had prevented the construction of a sewer network for Palestinian communities, particularly in Area C. Roughly 68 per cent of the Palestinian population had no sewage connection, while Israeli settlements released 5.5 million cubic metres of wastewater annually into the West Bank.

8. The negative impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy was manifold. In 2011, 25.8 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were living in poverty. Gross domestic product had since continued to slow, with unemployment reaching more than 25 per cent in the third quarter of 2013 and youth unemployment soaring to a devastating 39 per cent. Food insecurity had also continued to rise. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported that over 800,000 refugees were now dependent on its food assistance programme.

9. Although outside the reporting period, in July 2014, Israel had launched the deadliest and most destructive offensive on Gaza since the start of the Israeli occupation, killing almost 1,500 civilians, one third of them children. More than 11,000 others had been injured, many of them left with permanent disabilities. The situation in Gaza had been dire before the offensive, with thousands still homeless from previous Israeli offensives, and an acute shortfall of housing units. The recent attack had led to the total or partial destruction of up to 20,000 additional homes, leaving 108,000 Palestinians homeless.

10. Moreover, while the blockade had prevented the maintenance of Gaza's sanitation infrastructure, the recent military operations had significantly damaged it. As a result, some 90 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage were now released daily into the Mediterranean, creating pollution and health hazards. Close to 95 per cent of Gaza's water had become unfit for human consumption, forcing its

inhabitants to spend more than one-third of their income on water.

11. Finally, turning to the occupied Syrian Golan, although Security Council resolution 497 (1981) had declared null and void Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in that territory, Israel had continued its de facto annexation policies, discriminating against Syrian Arab citizens in favour of the 20,000 illegal Israeli settlers. Through restrictions on building permits and discrimination in urban planning, essential services and water allocation, in particular with respect to irrigation, Israel had diminished the ability of Syrian farmers to compete and sell their produce. It was also important to note that Israel had failed to clear landmines from populated Syrian areas and was continuing its illegal exploitation of the Golan's natural resources, including petroleum.

12. It was clear that the Israeli occupation constituted institutionalized discrimination, through a host of separate measures that were illegal under international law and that, together, posed an obstacle to peace and a violation of Palestinian and Syrian rights. The ultimate goal remained comprehensive peace, but peace could not be attained without ending the occupation, the implementation of United Nations resolutions and adherence to international law and norms.

13. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine), welcoming the comprehensive ESCWA report, said that Israel's recent 55-day attack on the Gaza Strip was the latest chapter in the tragic story of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. In the words of the Secretary-General, the devastation he had witnessed in the aftermath of the attack was beyond description. Others would be similarly stunned by both the human toll and the level of physical destruction.

14. Turning to the situation in occupied East Jerusalem, he said that the attacks and threats against holy sites, including the Al-Haram al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, risked inflaming a situation that was already tense due to illegal settlement activity, the intensification of illegal behaviour and the demolition of homes.

15. The occupation needed to end in order to achieve the two-State solution that was the goal of global consensus. There would therefore be a draft Security Council resolution to set a time frame for ending the occupation. He commended Sweden's recognition of the State of Palestine as an investment in peace and

encouraged all those who had not yet done so to do likewise in order to try to save the two-State solution.

16. In the context of a seminar held two years earlier in Cairo, at which papers had been submitted by think tanks from both Palestine and Israel in an attempt to quantify the cost of the occupation to the Palestinian economy, the Palestinian group had proceeded item by item and had come up with a figure of a \$7 billion annual loss. The Israeli group had compared the per capita incomes, on the one hand, of the West Bank and Jordan, and on the other hand those of the Gaza Strip and Egypt. According to the Israelis, had those two areas remained parts of Jordan and Egypt respectively, as had been the case before 1967, their per capita incomes would have been similar to those of the two countries to which they had previously belonged. By calculating the difference between the per capita incomes in Jordan and Egypt at the time of the study and subtracting the amounts lost in the years since 1967, they had arrived at a figure of \$9 billion as the net loss to the Palestinian economy under occupation. Both findings had been circulated as official United Nations documents. He wondered whether there were other possibilities or approaches, such as dynamic models, that might allow ESCWA to address the indirect effects and costs of the occupation to the Palestinian economy.

17. **Ms. Khalaf** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) replied that ESCWA did indeed have modalities for modelling and estimating the cumulative cost of the occupation over almost half a century. She believed the figures cited by the previous speaker underestimated the real cost. The comparison between the incomes of the occupied territories with the incomes that could have been expected had they remained part of Jordan and Egypt significantly reduced the impact of the occupation in a number of ways, including by failing to factor in the expropriation of assets such as land or the exploitation of natural resources, in particular perishable ones such as water. It would be difficult, for example, to estimate the cost to Gaza of water that had been rendered unfit for human consumption. It would also be important to look at the impact from the loss of lives and livelihoods. She agreed with the previous speaker that the only way to assess the total cost of occupation would be to construct a dynamic model that could examine the interlinkages between the different

variables in order to compare the State of Palestine today with what it would have been had it not been constrained by occupation. Education, for example, would have been different; there would probably have been a far more educated workforce. The question needed to be explored both directly and indirectly. ESCWA had the technical capability to undertake such an endeavour and would be happy to look into it.

18. **The Chair** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

19. **Mr. Hantouli** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that for 47 years, the international community had been unable to stop ongoing killings, arrests, land seizures, home demolitions and mobility restrictions imposed by Israel, which considered itself to be above any kind of law. Gangs of Israeli settlers uprooted trees, stole crops and flooded agricultural fields with wastewater. Israeli land seizures were designed to systematically gain control of natural resources for the benefit of settlers, especially in the occupied city of Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. Anyone who imported products from Israeli settlements was an accessory to those crimes.

20. Israel had evidently not been content with its attacks on Gaza in 2006 and 2008, nor with its seven-year illegal and inhumane blockade that deprived Gazans of their rights to work, health care, education and mobility. It had recently decided to add to the misery with its 51-day illegal war that had killed thousands of civilians, including hundreds of women and children, and destroyed homes, schools, universities and hospitals. Over 100,000 had been left homeless, and destruction of sanitation and power grids had left many more without water or electricity. Two years previously, the United Nations had predicted that Gaza would be rendered unliveable by the year 2028; Israel had apparently decided to move up that deadline.

21. Laws were what distinguished civilized people from animals. If individual acts of theft and murder were punishable by law, what about the systematic commission of tens of thousands of such crimes? The time had come for Israel to be called to account. The international community should take practical deterrent measures, such as boycotts and economic sanctions, to compel Israel to put an end to the criminal occupation. In the meantime, the State of Palestine would continue to defend its humanity and work towards a just and

comprehensive peace that ensured its security, stability and independence as a sovereign State with Jerusalem as its capital.

22. **Mr. Laasel** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the ESCWA report had documented ongoing destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and expansion of illegal settlements, and provided statistics on the negative impacts of such activities on economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The separation wall continued to block the access of Palestinians to their land and water resources. The economies of the West Bank and Gaza also suffered from onerous restrictions on transportation, communications and trade. In Gaza, the occupation authorities continued to impose their blockade, damage natural resources, and prevent humanitarian agencies from alleviating the suffering thereby caused. They were also withholding tax revenues owed to the State of Palestine. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to allocate the lion's share of water and other resources to its settlers, and was also drilling for oil and gas.

23. The practices of the Israeli occupation authorities constituted gross violations of international law. In particular, Israel's continued construction of the separation wall was in violation of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 concerning the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The wall was a racist measure that turned West Bank towns and villages into isolated islands. Israel also continued to pose a threat to public health in Palestinian territory and the Golan by dumping waste, including nuclear waste, and persisted with excavations in the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.

24. Alongside the physical blockade of Palestinian territory, the economic siege imposed on the Palestinian Authority had weakened the Government's ability to develop productive capacities and provide services, and had brought about unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty. The recent Israeli aggression against Gaza had only compounded the suffering. The international community should compel Israel, the occupying Power, to desist from such practices, abide by international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, and allow the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate sovereignty over all their territory, including East Jerusalem. Israel should also allow the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian

Golan access to their natural resources and compensate them for damages suffered.

25. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, as anticipated, the ESCWA report had exposed new violations of human rights committed against the peoples of the occupied Syrian Golan and Occupied Palestinian Territory. Not only had Israel, the occupying Power, failed to implement a single provision of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, but it had stepped up its deliberate policy of starving, impoverishing and marginalizing Arab inhabitants while appropriating and ethnically cleansing their land as part of a settlement expansion policy that had been condemned even by Israel's allies.

26. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the Israeli occupation authorities continued to cut down fruit-bearing trees and limit exploitation of natural resources, notably water, to its settlers. They had also appropriated agricultural lands to build wind farms and drill for oil, in partnership with European and American companies. The Israeli occupation also continued to impose its laws on Syrian citizens in the Golan in flagrant defiance of Security Council resolution 497(1981), which had decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect. Residents were barred from marketing their apple crop to the Syrian motherland. Israel was burying dangerous waste on the territory of the occupied Syrian Golan and its settlers were deliberately setting fires that damaged the area's ecology. The Israeli occupation authorities openly used the area of separation of forces to provide logistical support, medical care and food supplies to the terrorists and mercenaries of the Nusra Front. They also barred Syrian students from returning to the Syrian motherland to pursue their studies.

27. Palestinians as well were living a dark reality, with countless daily violations against their health, environment and livelihoods that exposed Israel's continued disregard for human rights in the face of long decades of international resolutions calling for its immediate withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee, the Organization, and all Member States should put pressure on Israel to end its occupation, which constituted the sole obstacle to development in occupied Arab territories. He urged delegations to reject any proposals that Israel might put

before the Committee for the purpose of disguising its violations and improving its image.

28. **Mr. Razak** (Malaysia) said that Israel had been exploiting the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories since 1967. Not only the West Bank wall, with its detrimental impact on agricultural land, but also the lack of water infrastructure, had left some 300,000 Palestinians in the West Bank at risk of acute water scarcity. Meanwhile, Israeli settlers in the territory had enough water to run farms and orchards, as well as swimming pools and spas.

29. Residents of the occupied Syrian Golan were also suffering from discrimination with regard to access to land, housing and basic services, including water allocation. Syrian farmers were subject to high taxes and restrictions on the use of water, and the Israeli authorities had further aggravated the illegal exploitation of the area's natural resources by claiming exclusive rights to petroleum exploration.

30. He expressed alarm at the poverty rates in the West Bank, Gaza and, in particular, East Jerusalem, and the fear that high unemployment and unstable working conditions would inevitably result in large-scale deskilling of workers. Moreover, the combination of soaring unemployment, falling purchasing power and recurrent shocks had pushed the majority of the Palestinian population of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem into food insecurity. While a full-fledged food crisis had been averted by UNWRA, food insecurity affected more than 1.5 million Palestinians, including refugees.

31. Full sovereignty for the Palestinians over their natural resources was key to reversing the crisis. Malaysia applauded the historic decision of the Swedish Government to recognize the State of Palestine, as well as the British Parliament's diplomatic recognition of Palestine as a sovereign State. The Palestinian decision to accede to various international conventions and treaties earlier in the year was a step in the right direction towards becoming a responsible member of the international community, bound by the rules and norms of international law. Meanwhile, Malaysia urged the United Nations system to strengthen its programmes of assistance to the Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, and called on the international community to ensure that all relevant United Nations agencies had

sufficient and reliable funding to reduce the suffering caused by the infringement of the sovereignty of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their own natural resources.

32. **Mr. Shihab** (Maldives) said that the report made clear that the Israeli occupation had institutionalized an array of measures that amounted to collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Discriminatory policies that included the accelerated construction of settlements and the increasing demolition of homes, agricultural lands and infrastructure, as well as the blockade of Gaza, whose effects had been exacerbated in the aftermath of the brutal July attack, were in violation of international law and a number of United Nations resolutions.

33. The inequity in access to water was among the most egregious examples of the impact of the occupation on natural resources. Israel controlled 100 per cent of the Western Aquifer Basin and extracted 94 per cent of its water, while Palestinians extracted only 6 per cent. Moreover, Israeli citizens consumed six times the daily amount of water as their Palestinian neighbours in the West Bank. In Area C, the approval of the Israeli civil administration was required even for small-scale projects such as wells and rainwater collection.

34. Food security had further deteriorated, with an estimated 57 per cent of households experiencing food insecurity. Lack of access to resources had created a chain reaction on the public health and education systems in both Gaza and the West Bank, where some 10,000 Palestinian students attended classes in tents, caravans or tin shacks. Moreover, students and teachers were often harassed and threatened with violence on their way to and from school. Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan faced similar discrimination in terms of access to land, housing, basic services and water allocation.

35. Maldives believed that only an end to the occupation and recognition of the State of Palestine could resolve that dismal situation, with a two-State solution that enabled Palestine to live side by side with Israel as an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to enjoy full sovereignty over its territory and resources.

36. **Mr. Al Wazzan** (Kuwait) said that the ESCWA report had demonstrated all the ways that the Israeli occupation worked against the very development

aspirations that the Committee had been discussing throughout the current session. Israel had been condemned by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for its apartheid practices, notably its construction of the separation wall in defiance of the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Israel's excessive use of force rose to the level of extrajudicial killing, and its land appropriation, settlement expansion and home demolition continued unabated. At the same time, the Palestinian economy remained cut off from the rest of the world, especially in Gaza, where Israel continued to impose its blockade in violation of its obligations under international humanitarian law.

37. General Assembly resolution 68/235 had demanded that Israel cease its exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; stressed that the settlements being constructed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, were contrary to international law; and called upon Israel to comply strictly with its obligations under international law and to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure. As had been the case with previous such resolutions, Israel had done precisely the opposite, and persisted with efforts to Judaize Jerusalem, most recently with fresh provocations at the Muslim holy places and an announcement that it would be building 1,000 new housing units for settlers.

38. His delegation urged all countries to recognize the State of Palestine and to support reconstruction efforts in Gaza in the wake of the recent Israeli aggression. Kuwait would be contributing US\$ 200 million to such efforts over the coming three years. The international community should continue to apply pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinian people to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. He called on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as to cease its ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty and withdraw from the remaining Lebanese territory that it occupied.

39. **Mr. Selman Ben Jasim Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that, according to the ESCWA report, 2013 had witnessed an increase of well over 100 per cent in the construction of Israeli settlement housing units, while over 600 Palestinian structures had been destroyed, displacing over 1,000 people. Israeli restrictions on the movement of persons and access to water resources

were an obstacle to peace, a danger to the environment and an impediment to development. Over 1.5 million Palestinians were affected by food insecurity. Unemployment stood at over 18 per cent in the West Bank and over 38 per cent in Gaza. Continued Israeli building of settlements, construction of the separation wall and exploitation of natural resources would only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis.

40. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel offered economic and social incentives to Israeli settlers while Syrian inhabitants suffered from discrimination in access to water, land and basic services. Such practices contravened the relevant United Nations resolutions, and his delegation reiterated the need for Israel to comply with international humanitarian law in order to achieve a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East crisis.

41. **Ms. Bajana** (Nicaragua) said that after decades of struggle and a criminal blockade, the people of Palestine, especially in the Gaza Strip, were subject to an economy of occupation that had affected every area of life from health to education, denying them the most basic services, curtailing their access to water and other natural resources, destroying their infrastructure and depriving them of access to decent housing.

42. Under such conditions, it was pointless to speak of sustainable development and economic growth. Especially in Gaza, where people's main concern had been to survive the bombings, some 40 per cent of the population was malnourished and 90 per cent of the water had been deemed unfit for human consumption. The scarcity of drinkable water was a violation of human rights.

43. In order to achieve sustainable economic development in the State of Palestine, the first order of business should be to force Israel to comply with the resolutions requiring it to recognize the right to Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty and therefore to allow refugees to return to the territory that historically belonged to them.

44. Nicaragua found it regrettable that, in 2014, the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and a year in which the vast majority of the international community had committed itself to helping to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the world had witnessed yet another massacre of children, women and men and the

destruction of Palestinian homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

45. Nicaragua reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemned the violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. It was up to the United Nations to oversee the reconstruction of Gaza. Further destruction was unacceptable. The international community should maintain its support for peace negotiations until the Palestinian people could exercise their legitimate right to be part of the United Nations.

46. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that, as a country that had itself endured illegal occupation, Namibia supported the full independence of Palestine as a State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and living side by side in peace with Israel. His delegation was deeply concerned by the grievous living conditions in the occupied territories and in the occupied Syrian Golan, which constituted a humanitarian disaster and human rights crisis in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and numerous resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

47. The Israeli occupation jeopardized the ability of the Palestinian people to exercise their basic human rights and security, let alone make meaningful progress in development. The divide between the West Bank and Gaza exacerbated the economic situation, subjecting the population to persistent fiscal crises, higher unemployment and food insecurity.

48. Through its recognition of Palestine as a non-Member Observer State of the United Nations, the international community had shown its overwhelming support for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. The international community, and in particular the United Nations, now had a moral responsibility to implement its own resolutions in order to ensure a lasting solution to the question of Palestine that would lead to statehood. Namibia had recently made its own modest contribution of \$1 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

49. **Mr. Almahmoud** (United Arab Emirates) said that every year, ESCWA submitted a new report with new information on the deterioration of the situations of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The expansionist and racist policies of the Israeli occupation forces constituted

shameful violations of human rights, including the right to development. Over 1 billion square metres of Palestinian land had been seized by Israel since the onset of the occupation. Israelis continued to settle Palestinian territory in violation of international humanitarian law, international criminal law and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August, 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention), and Israel continued to build the separation wall, destroy land and water resources, and seize Palestinian property. The Israeli occupation forces had also seized tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Government. Palestinians were barred from access to roads, infrastructure and services that were available only to settlers. The policies of the Israeli occupation forces had given rise to poverty, unemployment, low productivity and restricted market access. Some 40 per cent of Palestinian families in the West Bank suffered from food insecurity, and over 25 per cent of Gaza residents lived below the poverty line. The illegal Israeli occupation also continued in the Syrian Golan, where seizure of Arab lands and construction of settlements was on the rise, and the Arab population was barred from access to its natural resources. He hoped that the sustainable development issues of peoples suffering under foreign occupation would receive due attention in the post-2015 development agenda.

50. His country reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to its natural resources and to an independent State based on the borders of 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital. It also reaffirmed its support for the right of Syria to the return of the occupied Syrian Golan as an integral part of its sovereign national territory. International efforts should be intensified towards a comprehensive permanent settlement of the situation in the Middle East and an end to Israeli occupation of all Arab territories. He reaffirmed his country's commitment to provide support for Palestinian national institutions, and called on international donors to support UNWRA and provide the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people with assistance for economic and social reconstruction.

51. **Ms. Aljazi** (Jordan) said that for 47 years, Palestinian efforts towards economic development had been hampered by Israeli practices such as settlement construction, restrictions on the movement of persons



and goods, construction of the racist separation wall, land seizure, blocked market access, and appropriation of natural resources. Economic indicators could not grow normally in the face of such restrictions, which meant that the practices of the Israeli occupation were not only in flagrant violation of international law but also in violation of the right of the Palestinian people to development. Her delegation urged the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and apply pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right of self-determination and establish an independent state on their territory with East Jerusalem as its capital, and also called for continued relief assistance for the Palestinian people.

52. **Mr. Hasan** (Bahrain) said that the ESCWA report had exposed numerous Israeli practices that had a negative impact on development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. That included the imposition of a fishing limit of six nautical miles even though the most profitable fishing areas started at eight nautical miles from shore. In addition, he pointed to continued violence by settlers against Palestinian civilians and their property, expansion of internationally condemned settlements, construction of the separation wall, restrictions on construction and residency permits, including in East Jerusalem, and destruction of fields, homes and infrastructure. The blockade of Gaza, which had been deemed to be a form of collective punishment by the International Committee of the Red Cross, had resulted in the closure of Gaza's only power station, suspension of new school construction, and shortages of basic commodities.

53. The report also demonstrated how institutional discrimination was reflected in military orders, and how settlement activities constituted a creeping annexation that prevented the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State. The peace to which all aspired would never be achieved without an end to the occupation, and implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

54. **Mr. Annakou** (Libya) said that the Israeli occupation continued to strangle the Palestinian people by dividing up their land and destroying their economic resources in full view of the entire world. To the violations described in the ESCWA report should be added the war against Gaza launched by Israel in July and August of 2014, which had pushed unemployment and poverty rates there to close to

50 per cent. That war had destroyed infrastructure, disrupted services, and decimated sanitation, power, transportation and communications grids. Total losses were expected to reach \$5 billion.

55. In the West Bank, settlement expansion, construction of the separation wall, restriction of access to East Jerusalem, and home demolition continued, as well as control by the Israeli occupation of all groundwater resources. In the occupied Syrian Golan, occupation forces continued to prevent the return of residents who had been displaced in 1967 and to build settlements, bar Syrians from access to water sources, and seize agricultural land.

56. He wondered how the Committee could continue to talk about sustainable development for everyone when an occupied people was being so cruelly excluded. Which of the three dimensions of sustainable development was that people expected to enjoy when its economic infrastructure was being destroyed, its social fabric ripped apart, and its environment degraded? Libya stood with the Palestinian people in calling for an independent State on all of its territory with Jerusalem as its capital, and for the return of all refugees to their homeland. It also called for the international community to shoulder its moral responsibility to support legitimate Palestinian rights that were guaranteed under international law and international agreements. Solutions based on faits accomplis would not produce peace.

57. **Mr. Hajilari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that safety and security were prerequisites for development. It was therefore regrettable that during the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, an act of military aggression by the Israeli military had traumatized the Palestinian population and shocked the world.

58. The recent 50-day attack on the Gaza Strip had caused massive devastation that had left an urgent humanitarian disaster in its wake. More than 100,000 people remained homeless, while severely injured civilians continued to die for lack of basic medicines and life-saving treatments. The Islamic Republic of Iran condemned Israel's continuing blockade as a form of collective punishment, in particular through the obstacles it posed to the freedom of movement and to the reconstruction and recovery of the Gaza Strip.

59. Both Israel's conduct in Gaza and its ongoing settlement campaign, in addition to showing utter

contempt for the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, were tantamount to breaches of international humanitarian law, and were undoubtedly in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts. Settlements and other ongoing violations, including the demolition of homes and mass imprisonment, prevented the Palestinian people from enjoying a prosperous life.

60. The Islamic Republic of Iran believed that any solution to the protracted crisis in the Middle East required an end to the occupation and the restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent State of Palestine, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital. His delegation considered the Golan an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic and condemned all measures that undermined Syrian territorial integrity.

61. **Mr. Louati** (Tunisia) said that the ESCWA report had shown the various ways in which the Israeli occupation held back development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Israeli military attacks had taken the lives of millions, including children. Many hundreds of homes had been demolished and over a thousand persons displaced. Settlement expansion and construction of the separation wall continued unabated. Mobility restrictions and the blockade of Gaza had damaged economic and social life, and Israeli measures had harmed the environment and unfairly restricted access to land and water resources. The Palestinian economy had shrunk while unemployment increased, and the health and education systems had deteriorated. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had condemned Israeli policies as apartheid. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israeli settlement was promoted by favouritism in the allocation of land, housing and water resources, while Syrian citizens were denied their right to mobility and a decent standard of living.

62. Tunisia reiterated its support for the right of the Palestinian people to full sovereignty over its territory. At the twenty-eighth ministerial session of ESCWA held in Tunis in 2014, ESCWA member States had issued the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, which had strongly condemned Israeli military offensives targeting Palestinian civilians and

infrastructure, as well as the policies and practices of discrimination, racial segregation, apartheid, settlement-building and the Judaization of East Jerusalem. His delegation joined in the call to compel Israel to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions by ending the occupation, allowing Palestinians to exercise full sovereignty over their territory, and allowing Syrian residents the rightful use of their resources along with compensation for damages incurred as a result of the Israeli occupation.

63. **Mr. Chandra** (Indonesia), reaffirming the inalienable right of all human beings to enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, said that the people of Palestine had been robbed of their undeniable right to pursue social and economic prosperity in their own homeland. Israel's latest aggressions against Gaza in the summer had been devastating to the environment and natural resources, further curtailing Palestinian development and livelihood, and aggravating food insecurity.

64. As Member States began deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda, there was already widespread agreement that the eradication of poverty was key to achieving equitable and sustainable development. The Palestinian people, who had been marginalized, disenfranchised and disempowered for years, should be able to participate in that global quest, both by helping to shape the future development agenda and by being empowered to meet its goals.

65. Indonesia welcomed the international conference on the reconstruction of Gaza that had been convened in Cairo the preceding month and commended the generosity of countries that had pledged assistance. Together with Japan, his country had organized the Second Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, held in Jakarta in March. Indonesia was also promoting private sector development in Palestine across the sectors of tourism, light manufacturing, agriculture, information and communications technology, and infrastructure. However, until and unless focus turned to the root of the problem — the continued Israeli occupation — the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory would remain volatile.

66. Foreign occupation had infringed on the right of Palestinians to fully utilize their resources for development. The Committee's deliberations would be

meaningless if it failed to help the Palestinians tackle the challenges they faced. Every effort should be made to end the Israeli occupation and reinvigorate a viable peace process that would lead to recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to dignity and statehood.

67. **Ms. Meitzad** (Israel) said that her delegation was deeply disappointed by the anti-Israel campaign that had unfolded in the hall during the meeting, which undermined the Committee's credibility as a fair and impartial body by denigrating, defaming and delegitimizing the State of Israel. The presentation by the Executive Director of the Economic and Social Commission of West Asia had demonstrated once again that ESCWA was not interested in the real causes of turmoil in the Middle East. The Palestinian people did not need another United Nations report that told them what ESCWA wanted them to hear. It was time for the Commission to decide if it was going to address the radicalism and extremism that were destabilizing the region or whether it preferred to continue blaming Israel. Once again, ESCWA had drawn on unknown and unreliable sources to launch base accusations instead of presenting the situation in a professional manner, as would be incumbent on a United Nations body.

68. With respect to the recent operation in Gaza, it was important to set the record straight. The citizens of Israel wanted nothing more than to live in peace. Unfortunately, Hamas, a terrorist organization, had forced Israel's hand, once again choosing warfare over the welfare of the Palestinian people. Millions of Israelis had spent the summer months running to shelters for protection from thousands of rockets that Hamas had fired intentionally and indiscriminately towards their cities and towns. Israeli families had learned to their horror that their homes and kindergartens lay directly above Hamas's vast network of tunnels. No nation and no Government could be expected to stand by when its citizens were the target of rocket attacks, kidnappings and terrorist plots. Israel had done all it could to safeguard lives and had gone beyond the requirements of international law in that regard. Every civilian loss, both Israeli and Palestinian, was a tragedy, but the time had come to lay the blame where it belonged. If the previous speakers were genuinely concerned about improving the welfare of Palestinians, they should have directed their attention to the terrorist regime of Hamas, which cared more

about the destruction of Israel than it did about the condition of its own people.

69. Since the agenda item under consideration dealt with resources, it was important to note Hamas's blatant abuse of human, material and natural resources. In Gaza, hundreds of thousands of tons of cement and concrete had been used not to build infrastructure that would benefit the population that lived above ground but to build fortified terror tunnels underground. Hamas had poured an estimated 600,000 tons of concrete, amounting to tens of millions of dollars in aid from international donors, to build 3,000 tunnels that would enable its death squads to cross into Israel to kidnap and kill Israeli men, women and children. It was not hard to imagine how many schools, hospitals and homes could have been built with such resources. Not only was Hamas exploiting much of the humanitarian aid it received, but it was also directly exploiting and endangering Gazan youth through its operations.

70. Moreover, it was part of the modus operandi of Hamas to endanger its own people. In Gaza, no site had been off-limits for weapons storage and no ambulance had been unavailable for transporting terrorists; similarly, there had been no hospital that could not be turned into a terrorist command centre and no school run by UNWRA that could not serve as a site for stockpiling rockets, with launch facilities only steps away. By hiding behind its own civilians and firing on Israeli citizens, Hamas had repeatedly committed a double war crime. When the President of the Palestinian Authority sent letters of support to the families of terrorists, one could only wonder if Palestinian officials would ever recognize their own responsibility in hindering their people's development.

71. With respect to water management, it was no secret that water in the Middle East was scarce and that resources were being stretched to the limit of availability. Israel had gone beyond the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian water accord, signed in 1995, whose mandate was to protect, maintain and develop the region's water resources, yet the Palestinians continually drilled unauthorized wells and allowed untreated sewage to run into Israel's streams, contaminating aquifers on both sides. The Palestinian Authority had also failed to develop new water sources, contrary to the agreement. Moreover, while Israel had met and exceeded all its obligations under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine

Environment of the North-East Atlantic (Paris Convention), the Palestinians had breached two major areas by digging pirate wells and allowing wastewater to flow untreated into streams.

72. The delegations of a variety of Arab countries had used the platform of the Second Committee to launch a range of baseless accusations against Israel. It was absurd to hear some of the world's most oppressive tyrannies lecture the only real democracy in the Middle East about human rights. The representative of Qatar had had the audacity to criticize Israel, even though Qatar had served as the chief financial sponsor for some of the most brutal and dangerous groups in the Middle East. The representative of Iran — which oppressed its own people, helped other tyrannies to slaughter theirs and was the central banker, chief trainer and primary sponsor of terror — had provided an interesting spectacle when he spoke of development and human rights. In a similar vein, it had been difficult to follow the complex conspiracy theory delivered earlier by the representative of Syria, whose country had become an expert in blaming others for the catastrophe taking place on its own soil, for which it alone was to blame. The Syrian representative's attack on Israel in the current meeting had been merely one more desperate attempt to divert attention from the real issues at hand. As the representative of a Government with zero credibility, he would not fool anyone, nor would he silence the international outcry against the killing machine of the Assad regime.

73. If the Committee believed it was important to hold a Middle East debate, then it should not ignore the real threat to the region, which would require a level of introspection, honesty and realism that was clearly difficult for many countries. Israel was committed to partnership with the international community to advance peace and develop the Palestinian economy. It had already approved a three-part plan, publically rejected the day before by Hamas, to meet Palestinian economic and construction needs and to improve the access and movement of people and goods. Only the previous week, 600 tons of cement and 60 truckloads of construction aggregate and iron had been delivered to Gaza to help begin reconstruction. Moreover, all projects submitted by the international community and the Palestinian Authority had already been approved. Her country's hand remained outstretched. Israel was willing to share its knowledge and experience with its neighbours and to work with the international

community to tackle the issues with which the Committee had been entrusted.

74. **Mr. Al Shuaibi** (Oman) said that temporary solutions would not suffice. He called on the United Nations, the Security Council and influential States to shoulder their legal and moral responsibility to compel the occupying Power to implement the relevant resolutions and stop obstructing the peace process. The General Assembly had declared 2014 the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, but the occupying Power had chosen to continue its indiscriminate use of excessive force, in particular in the Gaza Strip, where it had killed and injured elderly persons, women and children, as well as destroying homes, commercial property, civilian infrastructure and United Nations installations. The international community should reject Israel's blockade, settlement expansion and campaign to alter demographic composition, and call on Israel to return to negotiations with a view to establishing a State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map, and the Arab Peace Initiative.

75. Peace and stability could not be achieved by the use of force. Now that a ceasefire agreement had been reached, he called on Israelis and Palestinians to resume negotiations towards a comprehensive and just settlement that provided peace and security to Israel and responded to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Security Council and the Quartet should play an active role in such negotiations. As the occupying Power, Israel should comply with relevant Security Council resolutions with a view to establishing an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, living side by side with Israel in accordance with internationally recognized borders.

76. **Mr. Al Derbass** (Saudi Arabia) said that numerous United Nations reports had documented arbitrary Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including construction of the separation wall, continued settlement building, excessive use of force, home demolition, closure policies and mobility restrictions. In the Gaza Strip in particular, Israel had imposed a suffocating economic blockade that had reduced productivity and the standard of living, and increased unemployment and poverty. His country had made resolution of the Palestinian problem a top priority, and,

in 2002, had put forward the Arab Peace Initiative, which offered all parties a unique opportunity to negotiate on clear bases. All the Arab States without exception had pledged to end the conflict and normalize relations on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the occupied Syrian Golan and occupied Lebanese territory, as well as an agreed-upon resolution to the refugee problem.

77. His delegation reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. Israel should be compelled to desist from its violations of international law and international agreements, its exploitation and theft of Palestinian land and water resources, and its degradation of the environment. Previous resolutions adopted by the Committee had affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to their natural resources, including land and water, and to compensation for damages incurred thereto in the course of the occupation. He called for earnest cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations on the basis of the principles of international legitimacy and the peaceful resolution of disputes, and for continued support by the international community for the right of Palestinians to make use of their land and natural resources.

78. **Mr. Jawhara** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that once again, the representative of the worst occupation known to humanity had levelled its customary accusations against ESCWA, the Committee and the Member States. The Committee was merely doing its job by focusing attention on the tragic realities being lived by Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan and by the Palestinian people, while the representative of the occupation was trying to provide cover for violations of internationally recognized resolutions and agreements. The plague of the occupation was compounded by terrorism committed by the Nusra front and other groups that were being provided with support by Israel. The Committee should continue to monitor the violations being committed by Israel, which was the primary obstacle to peace, security and stability in the region.

79. **Mr. Hantouli** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that all had become accustomed to hearing attacks by the occupying Power on the United Nations, the Member States and human rights organizations, which was typical behaviour for a criminal when confronted with evidence. It had been more than 20 years since the

Palestine Liberation Organization had signed the Oslo Accord that was supposed to pave the way for a just and comprehensive peace that put an end to the Israeli occupation and allow for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. That had indicated a genuine commitment to peace on the part of the Palestinians. Two decades later, Israel's violations of the understandings reached under that agreement had not ceased. When it came to extremism, he noted that the current meeting was taking place on the anniversary of the assassination of Itzhak Rabin. The same political outlook that had incited Rabin's assassin was now dominant in the Israeli Government, and that was what had led to the attack on Gaza and the recent religiously inspired provocations in Jerusalem. His delegation appreciated the work of the Committee and of ESCWA and would continue to oppose any efforts to cover the Israeli occupation with a veneer of legitimacy.

80. **Ms. Meitzad** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Syrian and Palestinian remarks had just proven her previous point about lack of introspection. Her country put criminals like those who had assassinated Prime Minister Rabin in prison instead of naming streets after them.

81. **Mr. Hajilari** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that rather than responding to the baseless accusations made by the representative of Israel, which would be more appropriately dealt with in other Committees, he would urge the Chair to request delegations to make their statements relevant to the agenda item under discussion.

82. **Mr. Selman Ben Jasim Al-Thani** (Qatar), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the occupying Power was using indiscriminate accusations to divert attention from its illegal and immoral policies. His delegation's assertions had been based on well-known facts documented in numerous reports, including the ESCWA report. He rejected the false allegations concerning his country's support for terrorism, and reiterated that the Israeli occupation was itself a manifestation of terrorism.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*