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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 204th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 27 January 1994, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI (Secretary-General of
the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.183/1994/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia), supported by Mr. SAMASSEKOU (Mali), nominated Mr. Cissé (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chairman, Mr. Remírez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba) and Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) for re-election to the two offices of Vice-Chairman and Mr. Cassar (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect the candidates as officers of the Committee nominated by the representative of Tunisia.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) took the Chair.

6. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the Committee was resuming its work on the basis of a General Assembly mandate that had been renewed with the approval of the great majority of Member States. In the relevant resolution adopted at the forty-eighth session, the General Assembly had welcomed the signing, on 13 September 1993, of the Declarations of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, had reaffirmed its permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine and had emphasized the valuable and positive contribution which the Committee could make in promoting the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The important role played by the Committee in mobilizing international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people was also highlighted in the report of the seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people which had been held in April 1993 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

7. The General Assembly had also requested the Committee to continue its efforts to reach out to non-governmental organizations. The role of such organizations, because of their presence in the field, was crucial in promoting the rights of the Palestinian people. Having a wide variety of interests and backgrounds, non-governmental organizations had been and continued to be strong defenders of the rights of the Palestinians. Their contribution to development, education and health had been invaluable.

8. As negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) progressed, the support of the international community would become more important than ever. It was that support, in the form of multilateral and bilateral assistance, which would help in the difficult days of transition. The United Nations was present in the field through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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(The Secretary-General)

Other agencies of the United Nations system had dispatched missions and were actively exploring avenues for cooperation in that process.

9. The General Assembly had stressed the great importance of coordinating such assistance. In that connection, he (the Secretary-General) had decided to appoint a senior United Nations official resident in the area of the Middle East to oversee coordination arrangements for the interim period.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that at a time when the Middle East region was passing through a complex period of transition, the Committee must act even more decisively and play a greater role in the current peace process so that it would lead to the enjoyment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and a peaceful settlement in the region that was comprehensive, just and lasting.

11. The statement made by the Secretary-General showed the particular importance which the latter attached to the settlement of the Palestinian question. The members of the Committee had noted with satisfaction the statement which the Secretary-General had made on 1 September 1993 on the occasion of the signing of the Washington Agreement and his important initiative calling for cooperation to promote the economic and social development of the Palestinian territories.

12. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that, at its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly had once again expressed its support for the Palestinian cause. The United Nations continued to support the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and would not relax its efforts to secure a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. The United Nations would bear continuing responsibility for the Palestinian question until it was settled in all its aspects. In his view the role of the United Nations and the Secretariat in the period ahead would involve three components: support for the Declaration by the United Nations system and increasing the role of the system in the settlement process; providing assistance to the Palestinian people in the transitional period by, for example, assisting in the training of Palestinian policemen; the necessary coordination of activities of the various United Nations bodies under the direct leadership of the Secretary-General.

13. He welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General, including the establishment of a high-level working group, the sending of a high-level mission to the occupied territories to meet with Palestinian leaders, and his announcement of the appointment of a personal representative, who would act directly in the region. It was to be hoped that all the organs of the United Nations would effectively and efficiently work for the implementation of those initiatives.

14. The Secretary-General withdrew.

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

15. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that, at its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly had adopted a number of important resolutions on the question of Palestine which took into account the major developments that had occurred recently. The resolutions also recognized that the Committee had an important role to play in the peace process that was under way. It should be emphasized that the resolutions had once again been adopted by large majorities. That reflected the determination of the international community to advance towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question and served to encourage the Committee to intensify its efforts even further in the coming year.

16. The Committee would need to consider soon what activities it wished to undertake in 1994 in pursuance of its mandate, having regard to the ongoing peace talks and current developments in the region. The Bureau of the Committee had already given some thought to the matter. A programme of work for 1994 would be circulated to the members of the Committee in the near future. In accordance with past practice he proposed the re-establishment of the open-ended working group.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that, as there were no further speakers, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the Rapporteur's proposal to re-establish the open-ended working group, with Mr. Cassar (Malta) serving as Chairman and Mrs. Vasisht (India) as Vice-Chairman.

18. It was so decided.

19. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) thanked the members of the Committee for having elected him as a Vice-Chairman and expressed the hope that the Committee's efforts in 1994 would be crowned with success.

20. Mr. REMIREZ de ESTENOZ BARCIELA (Cuba) expressed his gratitude at having been elected a Vice-Chairman of the Committee and said that he greatly appreciated the confidence that had been reposed in his country. The positive turn of events in the Middle East region gave cause for hope that speedy progress could be made in implementing the mandate of the Committee. The Committee must do everything in its power to promote progress in the talks aimed at securing a definitive and just settlement of the question of Palestine.

The meeting rose at noon.