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Chair: Mr. Logar (Slovenia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 64: 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/70/82-E/2015/13)

1. **Ms. Khalaf** (Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and Coordinator of the Regional Commissions), 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/70/82-E/2015/13). She reminded the Committee that, due to processing requirements under its mandate, the data in the report covered the period ending March 2015 and did not include the escalation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the end of September.

2. Israeli policies and practices continued to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and undermine the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. In that context, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had censured Israel under the rubric of apartheid and segregation. The 51-day Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 had resulted in unprecedented loss of life and destruction and prompted inquiries into the possibility of international crimes. The offensive had affected all aspects of Palestinian life in Gaza and could not be considered independently of the framework of the occupation and its general policies. Israel had gradually created two different regimes and legal systems in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that discriminated between residents according to religion and national identity. Israeli settlers enjoyed free and safe movement and all rights granted to Israeli citizens, while the Palestinians were subject to physical obstacles and administrative procedures restricting their movement, and lived under harsh military rule. Those restrictions affected all aspects of social and economic life, and impeded aid distribution and relief. Israel sought to establish a majority of Jewish Israeli residents in East Jerusalem, where it openly employed a demographic balance policy, and had de facto exiled more than 250,000

Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territory by revoking their residency permits. Among the numerous discriminatory regimes in place was the designation of 65 km of roads in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for use by Israelis only. Zoning and planning policies made it almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits, forcing them to build without Israeli permits and thus leaving them vulnerable to home demolition and displacement, especially in Area C and East Jerusalem.

3. Israel's fierce military offensive on the Gaza Strip — one of the most densely inhabited regions in the world — had caused more deaths and injuries, including 551 child casualties, than any previous military operation since the beginning of the occupation. Seven schools administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been bombed by Israel during the 2014 offensive, despite the fact that they had been designated as shelters for civilians and their coordinates had been communicated to the Israeli army. Eleven United Nations staff and employees had been killed in those incidents, in addition to scores of civilians. Human Rights Watch had also reported cases of the Israeli army using Palestinians as human shields.

4. In addition to arbitrary arrests and detentions, and ill-treatment and torture of detainees without accountability for perpetrators, Israeli security forces had been accused by human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, of unlawful killings of Palestinians and excessive use of force against demonstrators in the recent escalation. Over 19,000 Palestinian homes had been destroyed in the Gaza offensive, leaving 100,000 homeless and with limited ability to reconstruct owing to the blockade. Home demolitions, land confiscation, harassment and violence, access restrictions, and revocation of residency permits continued in the West Bank, and the illegal presence and accelerated expansion of Israeli Government-sanctioned settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory violated Palestinian rights to self-determination and development. At the same time, Israeli settlers continued with impunity their attacks and crimes against Palestinians and their property and religious sites. In 2004, the International Court of Justice had ruled that the West Bank wall and its associated regime were illegal, but Israel continued its construction regardless. The eight-year blockade of the

Gaza Strip amounted to the collective punishment of 1.8 million Palestinians and had had a devastating effect on the population. The Gaza offensive had caused massive destruction to the water and wastewater infrastructure and the agricultural sector, and exacerbated the water and sanitation crises and the dire environmental conditions. Israeli settlers and corporations continued to illegally exploit natural resources in the West Bank, using up to seven times the water allocated to Palestinians, while polluting the environment and preventing Palestinians from accessing half of their agricultural lands.

5. Because of the blockade and recurrent military offensives, living conditions in Gaza had never been worse. The physical destruction of economic institutions during the 2014 offensive had left unemployment at 42.8 per cent by the fourth quarter of that year. The dire economic conditions were manifest in the food insecurity rates of 57 per cent in Gaza and 19 per cent in the West Bank, even before the 2014 offensive. Dependency on UNRWA food aid in Gaza had increased more than tenfold since 2000. Medical care facilities, equipment and staff in Gaza were directly affected by the blockade and the offensive, and hundreds of thousands of children were in need of psychological support. In the West Bank, Israeli restrictions impeded access to, and construction of, medical and health care-related services and infrastructure. Schools that had not been destroyed were operating double or triple shifts to cover students' basic education needs in Gaza, while Israeli restrictions and settler attacks affected Palestinian students in the West Bank.

6. Israeli violations of international law continued in the occupied Syrian Golan, illegally annexed by Israel in 1981, with the illegal transfer of settlers into that Syrian territory, the expansion of settlements, and the exploitation of the territory's natural resources. In contrast to those settlements, which received Israeli Government support and incentives, the Syrian citizens living under occupation faced discriminatory policies such as unequal water allocation and restrictions on construction and expansion of village boundaries. Israel had continued to employ such policies, which violated international humanitarian and human rights law, the principle of non-discrimination and the right to self-determination. The illegal settlement enterprise, collective punishment and disregard for human life and dignity affected all facets of Palestinian society and

economy. There would be no prospects for peace unless Israel complied with international law and ended its occupation.

7. Adding to the information contained in the report, she said that the injustice was continuing, with 59 Palestinians killed by Israelis since the beginning of October 2015, including 14 children. Six thousand had been injured by rubber-coated metal bullets, beatings or tear gas. The most recent surge in such injustices had started when Israeli settlers burned the Palestinian Dawabsheh family alive on 31 July 2015, and the settler problem had not abated. The international community had the duty to stop violations of international law by Israel. It was in the interest of all parties to achieve a just peace and reverse the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people.

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

9. **Mr. Abu Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that since the days of Adam Smith, classical economics had identified natural resources alongside labour and capital as factors of production. The theft of Palestinian natural resources by the occupation authority had been amply documented. The report just introduced by the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia stated that as of 2013, Israel had officially confiscated more than 1,000 km² of Palestinian-owned land constituting 20 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. According to a 2009 Amnesty International report on Palestinian water resources, for four decades, Israeli military orders issued ostensibly to "protect" nature resources and reserves, including water resources, had had a crippling impact on Palestinian agricultural activities throughout the West Bank, while Israeli settlers, during the same period, had been given virtually unlimited access to water supplies to develop and irrigate the large farms which helped to support unlawful Israeli settlements. The 2012 report of the Secretary-General on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan noted that around 40 per cent of Israeli settler agriculture in the West Bank was farmed on privately owned Palestinian land, with Israeli settlers exporting around US\$ 285 million worth of agricultural products, whereas Palestinians only exported US\$ 19 million (A/69/348, para. 32).

10. The ESCWA report also detailed how terrorist Israeli settlers had uprooted, burned or sprayed with toxic chemicals thousands of fruit-bearing trees, including olive trees, most of which were older than the State of Israel and some of which were older than the Children of Israel themselves. The Israeli separation wall with its current planned route would isolate 9.4 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Over the previous four years, only half of applications by Palestinian farmers for permits to farm their land on the other side of that wall had been approved.

11. All the numerous well-documented reports from the relevant United Nations agencies appeared to have no effect whatsoever on Israel. The occupation was a war crime being committed in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of August 12, 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention). The international community should take punitive measures against Israel to the full extent allowed by international law. He called on Member States to boycott goods produced by the settlers, to prohibit companies from doing business with settlers, to refuse to extend citizenship to settlers, and to withhold credentials from members of the Israeli diplomatic corps who were settlers.

12. **Ms. Moleko** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group welcomed the ESCWA report, which, though distressing, was useful in highlighting the effects of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, characterized by discriminatory policies and practices; Israeli control over water resources in the West Bank; mobility restrictions in the West Bank, rendering agricultural land inaccessible; scarce fuel supplies affecting provision of basic services (living conditions in Gaza were at their worst level since 1967); and a very high level of food insecurity (one third of households in 2013). Though the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals were new tools for changing the world and pledged that no one would be left behind, the report had shown that the Palestinian people would indeed be left behind and would not enjoy the fruits of sustainable development as long as they did not have sovereignty over their natural resources.

13. **Mr. Al Shanfari** (Oman), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Palestinian Authority had suffered serious financial problems as a

result of Israel withholding approximately US\$300 million annually in tax revenues. The Israeli occupation authorities' policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan had led to widespread unemployment and poverty. Israel continued to deny the populations under its occupation access to their natural resources. The ESCWA report had detailed Israeli displacement of persons and destruction of property, and the violence being perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers. It had also noted that residents of Palestinian communities not connected to the water network were forced to purchase water at a vastly increased cost. He called on the international community to take all necessary measures to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions by desisting from its illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Those practices obstructed the economic and human development of the populations under occupation and constituted the main obstacle to peace in the region.

14. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that once again, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia had submitted its report documenting the racist practices perpetrated against residents of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and once again, Israel, the occupying Power, had been shown to have failed to implement the provisions of United Nations resolutions calling for, inter alia, respect for the right of peoples under foreign occupation to the use of their natural resources. If anything, the exploitation, destruction, blockade, land confiscation, settlements and ethnic cleansing had grown worse. In addition, in the area of separation in the Golan, Israel was providing support to terrorists affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front, thereby exposing inhabitants to new threats that were unprecedented even in the dark history of the Israeli occupation. He reiterated his delegation's call on ESCWA to include documentation of Israel's open support for such terrorists in its subsequent reports.

15. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to bar farmers from access to markets in their motherland, notably during the all-important apple season, while also denying them the right to take part in new economic enterprises that were reserved only for settlers, such as wind power generation and exploration

for oil and gas. From its inception, the goal of the occupation had been to drive residents of the Golan from their homes and lands by depriving them of basic necessities. For example, they were barred access to the water they needed for agriculture, while Israeli settlers received large quantities of subsidized water. Throughout the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel was imposing its laws in violation 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. Israel had also reimprisoned the Syrian Mandela, Sidqi al-Maqt, who had been freed in 2012 after 27 years behind bars.

16. Palestinians and Syrians had suffered occupation for decades because the so-called international community had failed to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its crimes, while certain States turned a blind eye to the human rights violations committed by Israel and even provided it with economic and military support. If the new development agenda was truly to leave no one behind, the Israeli occupation must be brought to an immediate end and those responsible for perpetrating or ignoring its crimes must be called to account.

17. **Ms. Bajaña** (Nicaragua) said that the Palestinian people had struggled for more than 67 years against a criminal economic blockade that denied them the right to freedom of movement and destroyed their infrastructure, especially in the Gaza Strip, whose inhabitants had to struggle to survive. There was no point in talking about sustainable development and economic growth when a people was under military occupation and had no control over their land, water and natural resources. Food insecurity in Palestine was growing and 90 per cent of the water in the Gaza Strip was not fit for human consumption. Water shortages were a violation of human rights and the only solution was the end of hostilities.

18. Sustainable development for the Palestinian people meant compliance with the resolutions calling for Palestinian self-determination and sovereignty, along with the return of refugees to the land that was historically theirs. It was regrettable that, in a year when the United Nations was able to fly the Palestinian flag, the international community still had to adopt resolutions to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people. Nicaragua reiterated its solidarity with the

Palestinian people and their struggle for their freedom and inalienable rights. People under occupation also had a right to development, which should not involve the destruction of schools. A just and sustainable peace required a solution to the problems of refugees, settlements, borders, security, prisoners and water.

19. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force in the 2014 Gaza conflict had resulted in unprecedented death and destruction. The deterioration of the human rights situation was attributable to the occupying Power, Israel, which continued to violate international humanitarian and human rights law. The apartheid wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory severely affected the movement of Palestinians attempting to reach their farmland and water resources, destroyed agricultural land and destabilized the ecosystem. His delegation was gravely concerned at the dramatic increase in gross violations of the rights of children, the most vulnerable group in the Territory, perpetrated by the Israeli military and settlers. The harsh realities of the lives of children subjected to long-term occupation, repression and violence would bear heavily not only on their futures, but also on the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

20. In the occupied Syrian Golan, severe water use restrictions, discrimination, and illegal exploitation of natural resources under exclusive petroleum exploration licences issued by the Israeli authorities left Syrian farmers and residents at a disadvantage. His delegation was also deeply concerned at the alarming and unacceptably high poverty and unemployment rates in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In the long term, those conditions would inevitably result in the workforce becoming largely unskilled, in addition to other social- and economic-related problems. The issue of sovereignty over resources, though crucial to resolving the crisis, could not be approached in isolation. His country therefore welcomed the Palestinian decision to accede to various international conventions and treaties in early 2015.

21. His delegation urged the United Nations to strengthen programmes of assistance to mitigate the suffering of Palestinians and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, and called on the international community to ensure that relevant agencies such as UNRWA were adequately and reliably funded. It hoped that the ongoing peace talks would lead to

reconciliation, reconstruction, development and the prosperity of the Palestinian State and people.

22. **Mr. Jamil** (Iraq) said that the ESCWA report had shown how dim the prospects were for Palestinian economic development. The occupation authorities were destroying the productive capacities of Palestinian farmers by confiscating their land and water. One in two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip was unemployed. The private sector was stagnating and the Palestinian Authority was unable to meet its obligations owing to Israeli control over its resources. Denial of the Palestinian people's right to be integrated into the global economy could now be added to the growing list of violations being committed by the destructive Israeli occupation.

23. His delegation condemned racist Israeli efforts to alter the demographic dynamic of Jerusalem. The occupation authorities had levelled thousands of acres of land to make room for its "greater Jerusalem" project, creating a ring of settlements designed to cut off East Jerusalem from its Arab hinterland. He expressed the hope for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab Peace Initiative, and called for the establishment of an indivisible Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

24. **Mr. Pinto Damiani** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that Israel had erected numerous discriminatory obstacles to the development of the State of Palestine. His country was in favour of the sovereign management of natural resources and opposed their illegal exploitation by others whose violations of sovereignty pushed peoples into poverty and despair. Countries' sovereignty over their natural resources had been reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Without the ability to use their own resources to meet their needs, developing countries, and the State of Palestine in particular, would not be able to achieve sustainable development. From General Assembly resolution 523 (VI) to resolution 3016 (XXVII) and those adopted in the intervening years, the United Nations had a sufficient body of precedents on the rights of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. The State of Palestine should therefore be able to exercise its right to manage and use its natural resources, and Israeli interference not only denied it

sustainable development but also had environmental consequences. The General Assembly, acting through the Second Committee, should make every effort to put an end to the exploitation of the natural resources of the Palestinian people.

25. **Mr. Ahmad Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) said that the year 2014 had seen the largest number of civilian Palestinian fatalities since 1967. Among the many disturbing items contained in the ESCWA report was the destruction and damage inflicted during the 51-day war against Gaza on over 100 schools, most of which were affiliated with UNRWA. In the West Bank, incidents involving schools had almost tripled from 2013 to 2014. That was hardly consistent with the right of education for all enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Food security, another prerequisite for development, had been rendered impossible because of Israel's policies of land confiscation, settlement expansion and resource exploitation. Israel's violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law were an ongoing obstacle to peace. Israel was also continuing to construct its separation wall in the West Bank in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, thereby cutting Palestinians off from health services, educational institutions and water sources. Palestinian women suffered disproportionately from unemployment, while Palestinian children were subject to wide-ranging abuses. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to allocate a disproportionate amount of water resources to its settlers while cutting off access for the Syrian population. The region would not see a comprehensive peace settlement until Israel complied with its obligations under international law and ended its occupation.

26. **Mr. Gad** (Egypt) said that although the past year had seen the largest number of civilian Palestinian fatalities since 1967, the Israeli occupation continued to deprive the populations under its occupation of their basic rights and use excessive force with impunity. Among the areas of grave concern was Israel's exploitation of Palestinian and Syrian natural resources. Unprecedented settlement expansion threatened Palestinian territorial integrity, while the blockade of Gaza constituted a form of collective punishment. Constraints imposed by Israel, lack of external financing and increased expenditures had

brought about a financial crisis for the Palestinian Authority.

27. Israel, the occupying Power, had instituted what was in effect an apartheid system. It issued military orders that applied to Palestinians but not to settlers, and required Palestinians to obtain special permits for a host of activities that the settlers engaged in freely. That was not to mention the separation wall that Israel was continuing to construct in violation of international law. Israel's exploitation of natural resources was in violation of the 1907 Hague rules (Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land) and the Fourth Geneva Convention. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, water supplies that were already feeling the pressure of climate change were further limited by Israeli restrictions. The 2030 Agenda's much trumpeted goal of leaving no one behind would ring hollow in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan as long as the Israeli occupation persisted.

28. **Mr. Sareer** (Maldives) said that every year, the Committee met to voice its support for its Palestinian friends. Sadly, however, it once again bore witness to new and continuing atrocities by those who chose to promote violence, hatred and fear. Without sovereignty over their land and natural resources, and subjected to various forms of discriminatory treatment, the Palestinians could not reasonably be expected to outline policies relating to development. His delegation strongly condemned the Israeli policies and practices such as the illegal settlement enterprise, collective punishment and disregard for human life and dignity, which had affected all aspects of the Palestinian society and economy.

29. Regular offensives had resulted in a state of perpetual destruction in Gaza, which had a severe impact on the environment, access to water, and public health. As noted in the report, the most recent offensive had further damaged and contaminated the strained water networks in Gaza, while Israel controlled nearly all water resources in the West Bank. The situation remained dire in the West Bank and the occupied Syrian Golan, where settlers enjoyed disproportionate use of water and agricultural resources. The risks to health had also become more serious with increased air and soil pollution resulting from heavy bombardment and the remnants of explosive materials.

30. His delegation called on Israel to cease all actions harming the environment in the territories it occupied, as well as its destruction of infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewage and electricity networks. His delegation strongly condemned the illegal actions, constant provocations and serious human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. His Government reiterated its strong and steadfast support for the rights of the Palestinian people, including the need for a two-State solution and the right to self-determination, and called for an end to the shameful occupation that continued to exist seven decades after the international community had affirmed the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.

31. **Ms. Stewart** (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was concerned about the economic, social, environmental and human rights situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The analysis of the conflict had hitherto focused on peace and security, but a human rights-based analysis should also be prioritized through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Restrictions on access to the legal system, freedom of movement, and the right to development worsened the already deleterious situation in the Palestinian territories and denied the Palestinian people their legitimate aspirations to well-being. Given the very complex situation, the parties should revive their dialogue mechanisms and work towards a solution that would benefit their respective peoples. Negotiations should resume on the basis of previous agreements supported by international law and decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. However, from the perspective of the Second Committee, the real question was how to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Palestine through access to basic health care, education, women's empowerment, and the provision of water and sanitation services and sustainable sources of energy. Inequalities must be reduced, and sustainable growth should enable those territories to build resilient cities and societies where peace and a culture of peace were a part of everyday life. The responsibilities of the Governments of Israel and the State of Palestine were different but could not be dissociated from the central goal of ensuring the sustainable development of the Palestinian people.

32. **Mr. Sedigh Mostahkam** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the practices of the occupying Power, which violated international humanitarian law as described by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, had resulted in the deaths and injuries of thousands of civilians, including children, women and peaceful demonstrators. The ESCWA report noted serious concerns regarding exacerbated poverty, particularly in Gaza; the deteriorating economic situation and increasing food insecurity; the dire state of the health sector, particularly after the 2014 conflict; severely impeded access to water, sanitation and hygiene services; and Palestinian women's very low participation in the workforce, owing to vulnerability at checkpoints, settler violence and long commutes to work locations.

33. Israel's illegal settlement campaign, which was at the core of the 48-year foreign occupation, remained the main obstacle to Palestine's sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Israel had continued to occupy the Syrian Golan for several decades, and illegally exploited the land, water and natural resources there. His delegation considered the Golan as an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and condemned all measures taken by the illegitimate occupying Power to undermine that country's territorial integrity. Any solution to the crisis in Palestine must entail the immediate termination of the occupation, the restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent and viable State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, and full sovereignty over their natural resources.

34. **Ms. Jerak** (Kuwait) said that at a time when the Committee was focusing on implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, the ESCWA report had demonstrated in detail how the Israeli occupation was destroying any possibility of Palestinian development. Israel had confiscated more than 1,000 km² of Palestinian-owned land since the start of the occupation. Some 40 per cent of the West Bank was under the jurisdiction of Israeli settler councils. Israeli settlers used six times as much water per capita as Palestinians, with the daily consumption for Palestinians far below the minimum amount recommended by the World Health Organization. Israeli restrictions on Palestinian economic activity had exacerbated food insecurity and medicine shortages,

especially in Gaza. The report also documented the use of excessive force by the Israeli authorities, which frequently amounted not merely to extrajudicial killing but to premeditated murder.

35. In its resolution 68/235, the General Assembly had called on Israel to cease its exploitation of Palestinian natural resources. However, Israel had ignored that resolution, just as it had ignored Security Council resolution 497 (1981), the Fourth Geneva Convention and article 55 of the Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land. Israel's contempt for international law was evident from its continued construction of illegal settlements. During its war against Gaza, Israel had used the most destructive modern technologies available against women, children and the elderly. Israel was also continuing its assault on the Palestinian cultural heritage with its ongoing violations of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound. She called on the international community to pressure Israel to allow Syrians to exercise their right to the use of their natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan and to allow Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. Her Government renewed its pledge to provide US\$ 200 million for reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

36. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that the 2030 Agenda had called for action to remove obstacles to the full realization of the rights of people living under colonial and foreign occupation. The situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories was the most glaring and enduring example of the harmful effects of such occupation. The denial of economic opportunities to Palestinians was merely one part of a long-standing catalogue of violations perpetrated by the occupying Power. In the forty-eighth year of occupation, Israel's illegal policies and measures, including the wall of oppression and shame, the eight-year blockade of Gaza, the accelerated approval of settlements, and the detention and killing of innocent civilians, had continued unabated. Palestinian resources were being plundered and the economy was being suffocated. The persecution had endured for too long. The parameters for resolving the conflict were well known and had been defined in numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the Arab Peace Plan and the Quartet's road map to Mideast peace; a two-State

solution based on the pre-June 1967 borders was the only real basis for long-lasting peace. Although a number of donor countries and humanitarian organizations continued to provide assistance to Palestine, the only way to ensure its path to sustainable development and a dignified life for its citizens was to end the occupation by Israel.

37. His delegation firmly believed that the Palestinian people had the right to ownership and control of all of its natural resources, which had the potential to make Palestine financially stable and economically viable, were it not for the activities of the occupying Power. The naval blockade of the Gaza Strip preventing development of the Gaza Marine zone had deprived the Palestinian economy of revenue and ensured that it would remain dependent on Israel for energy.

38. Noting that, during the current session, many Committee members had emphasized the role of culture in sustainable development, his delegation expressed its deep concern at the ongoing Israeli occupation and settlement activities, which had resulted in the destruction of historical, archaeological, cultural and religious sites throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It therefore urged Israel to refrain from targeting such sites, which was in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The delegation also urged the United Nations and other development partners to continue to provide development assistance to meet Palestinians' needs. His delegation called on Israel to work with United Nations agencies, donors and humanitarian organizations to ensure that aid and development projects for Palestine were delivered in a timely manner, to halt settlement construction and to end the occupation.

39. **Mr. Annakou** (Libya) said that the ESCWA report had shown that the occupation authorities were continuing to construct new settlements, displace Palestinians and uproot trees on the West Bank. Israel was also continuing construction of its separation wall, which prevented many Palestinian farmers from tending their fields, and continuing to impose its blockade on Gaza, which was a form of collective punishment that violated international law. All of the groundwater in Palestinian territory was under the control of Israel, which allowed Palestinians to use only 6 per cent of it.

40. It had been only a month since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and he wondered how likely it was that the goal of leaving no one behind would be achieved for the Palestinian people. With the occupation denying Palestinians access to their water and land, they were not likely to achieve food security. With schools being bombed, the goal of education for all seemed out of reach. When qualified Palestinian women were left unemployed, they were unlikely to achieve gender equality. The discrimination suffered by Palestinians at every turn was hardly conducive to a peaceful and inclusive society. Sustainable development would be difficult under an occupation determined to destroy even such rudimentary infrastructure as Palestinians had available. The same applied to the occupied Syrian Golan.

41. The practices of the Israeli occupation authorities were in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights law. His delegation reiterated its support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State on all of their territory with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as to the return of all refugees to their homeland. He also called for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza.

42. **Ms. Al-Jazi** (Jordan) said that for almost five decades, Israel's illegal settlement expansion, land confiscation, control over natural resources, closure policies and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods had been obstacles to Palestinian development. The result was lagging development indicators, sluggish economic growth, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, declining incomes, rising inflation and a shrinking agricultural sector. Israeli bypass roads and the separation wall cut off farmers from their fields, while Palestinians were discriminated against in the distribution of water.

43. Development meant not only economic progress but also peace, equality and social justice, none of which could prevail as long as Israel persisted in its occupation and expansionist policies. Her delegation called on the international community to pressure Israel to allow the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and urged continued international support for the Palestinian people to overcome their development deficit.

44. **Mr. Anshor** (Indonesia) said that poverty and desperation overshadowed justice, regard for human rights and development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The rights and dignity of the Palestinian people had long been trampled by the occupying Power, as they had been forced to leave their homes and had been robbed of their undeniable rights to social and economic prosperity and self-determination. The blockades and barriers imposed upon them undermined the potential of the Palestinian economy and exacerbated dependence on imports and foreign aid. Israeli settlers and settler violence had a clear impact on the rights of Palestinians, particularly concerning access to land and water, education, a clean environment and adequate standards of living, thus demonstrating the long-term and systematic nature of the planning, policies and practices of the occupying Power. Of great concern were the first recession since 2006, unacceptably high unemployment rates in the West Bank and Gaza, and the fact that the International Monetary Fund had indicated that the dark clouds would not be leaving anytime soon. Those trends undoubtedly ran counter to the commitment to leave no one behind in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda. The problem of economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was essentially political in nature, not technical.

45. His country had recently hosted the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, at which East Asian countries and international organizations had reiterated their commitment to support the development of Palestine, including through capacity-building programmes and reinvigoration of its business environment. Indonesia had conducted such programmes for around 1,000 Palestinian officials through the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership. At the April commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Asian-African Conference, held in Jakarta, the Asian-African countries had adopted the Declaration on Palestine in which they expressed their support for the independence of the State of Palestine. His delegation reaffirmed its solidarity with the Government and people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to their natural resources. The United Nations must honour the mandate of its Charter and work vigorously towards starting a meaningful and reliable peace process, with a view to ending the Israeli occupation.

46. **Mr. M. Osman Sid Ahmed Mohammed Ali** (Sudan) said that the ESCWA report had shown that during the preceding year, the practices of the Israeli occupation had reached unprecedented levels of destructiveness. In both the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel persisted in its excessive use of force, settlement expansion, destruction of property and exploitation of natural resources, all with impunity. That not only constituted a violation of human rights but also led to deteriorating economic and social conditions at a time when the international community had just adopted the 2030 Agenda. The goal of leaving no one behind should include peoples suffering under foreign occupation. However, the report showed that Israel, the occupying Power, was continuing to undermine the right of Palestinians to self-determination through forced displacement, restrictions on movement, destruction of property and demolition of homes. Settlement expansion was a major impediment to Palestinian development. The ongoing blockade of Gaza continued to imprison almost 2 million people in an area of land already recognized as one of the most densely populated in the world. Palestinian women in particular were vulnerable to Israeli measures enforced at checkpoints, settler violence and prolonged commutes to work locations, and consequently suffered higher unemployment rates. Restrictions on movement also prevented ambulances from reaching their destinations in a timely fashion. In the occupied Syrian Golan, settlers were given preferential access to water and other resources. Israel should cease its exploitation of natural resources, comply with its obligations under international law and end its occupation.

47. **Mr. Al Shuaibi** (Oman) said that the Palestinian Authority had suffered serious financial problems as a result of Israel withholding approximately US\$300 million annually in tax revenues. The Israeli occupation authorities' policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan had led to widespread unemployment and poverty. Israel continued to deny the populations under its occupation access to their natural resources. The ESCWA report had detailed Israeli displacement of persons and destruction of property, and the violence being perpetrated against Palestinians by Israeli settlers. It had also noted that residents of Palestinian communities not connected to the water network were forced to purchase water at a vastly increased cost. He called on the international community to take all

necessary measures to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions by desisting from its illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Those practices obstructed the economic and human development of the populations under occupation and constituted the main obstacle to peace in the region.

48. **Mr. Amer** (Israel) said that the ESCWA report, which was one-sided, biased, lacking in facts, and based on selective and often unreliable data, along with the statements made during the meeting, was yet another instance of inflammatory Israel-bashing. The remarks made by Ms. Khalaf demonstrated her obsession with attacking Israel; they were in violation of her position as an impartial international civil servant and amounted to serious misconduct. Given that the Arab world was already facing deep inequalities, social divides, unemployment, denial of human rights and the steady rise of extremism, the time spent preparing the report would have been better spent engaging in honest self-observation to address the real problems in the region. One would not know from the report, for example, that Hamas, internationally recognized as a terrorist organization, administered the Gaza Strip through violence, repression, denial of basic human rights and the misuse of economic and financial resources, or that it had initiated the 2014 conflict, fired thousands of rockets and missiles on Israeli cities, deliberately escalated the situation, and repeatedly broken ceasefires. That conflict had caused socioeconomic hardships on both sides, yet the report had failed to mention the hardship endured by millions of Israeli families running for shelter from the rockets fired indiscriminately by Hamas. Thousands of children were still undergoing psychological therapy as a result of 14 years of non-stop missile attacks on their houses, and thousands of businesses in southern Israel had shut down, causing economic hardship.

49. It was unsurprising that the report had ignored the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, a joint initiative of the United Nations and Israel which had allowed for authorization of new projects in Gaza, entry permits for the business sector, and the entry of millions of tons of building materials. Although rockets were still being fired on Israel, it had approved more permits for entry into the country for urgent medical care, and had expanded the capacity of the Kerem Shalom border crossing to accommodate another 800 trucks daily at a

time when the Palestinian Authority was not willing to take the necessary measures to gain control of the crossings.

50. It was surreal to hear, year after year, allegations of human rights violations by Israel from some of the world's most infamous human rights abusers. The cynical attacks against Israel by the representative of Syria were another desperate attempt to divert attention from the crimes Syria committed against its own people on a daily basis. Given that his regime was shamelessly killing thousands of Syrians and Palestinians, his lies were not to be taken seriously. Perhaps the representative of Syria would like to explain to the Committee how dropping barrel bombs on schools, markets and hospitals was compatible with development. Equally ridiculous was the audacity of the representative of Qatar in criticizing Israel when his country was the chief financial sponsor for some of the most brutal and dangerous terrorist groups in the Middle East, and enslaved foreign workers in subhuman conditions, causing scores of injuries and deaths. Iran was a true multitasker, repressing its own people while simultaneously helping other tyrants to slaughter theirs. Perhaps the representative of Iran would like to report to the Committee on how many hundreds of political opponents, homosexuals and alleged traitors had been executed in his country thus far in 2015. Iran was also the central banker, chief trainer and primary sponsor of terrorism.

51. Having heard their various accusations against Israel and their ever-so-vocal support for the Palestinians, one would presume that the Arab countries whose representatives had just delivered statements actually assisted in the economic development of the Palestinians, which was not the case. Out of nearly US\$2 billion that had been pledged by Arab countries at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, less than US\$ 200 million had actually been disbursed. The baseless accusations and malicious lies by the Palestinian representative had been answered time and again and he would therefore not take up the Committee's time in repeating what had already been said. Perhaps the Palestinians did not return to the negotiating table because it was easier to blame others, incite violence, and manipulate the truth than to take responsibility and act like the State they claimed to be. Israel called on the Palestinians to join it on the path to peace and reconciliation.

52. **Ms. Al Ateibi** (United Arab Emirates) said that one month previously, the international community had adopted the 2030 Agenda, which pledged that no one would be left behind and called for effective measures and actions to be taken to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continued to adversely affect their economic and social development as well as their environment. The ESCWA report demonstrated the deterioration of economic, social and humanitarian conditions in areas occupied by Israel. Land confiscation, the blockade of Gaza, closures in the West Bank and construction of the separation wall continued in flagrant disregard of United Nations resolutions. Israel's continued settlement expansion was a violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and undermined any chance of a two-State solution. The policies of the occupation had brought about an increase in poverty and unemployment, and constituted a violation of the right to development. Restrictions on movement also prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching the West Bank and Gaza, and several UNRWA workers had been killed in Israeli attacks. In the occupied Syrian Golan as well, Israel was expanding settlements, confiscating land and monopolizing resources.

53. It was obvious that the root cause of the decline in living conditions among the Palestinian people was the Israeli occupation. His delegation commended the efforts of United Nations agencies and urged donors to provide UNRWA with the necessary support. The United Arab Emirates contributed US\$ 1.8 million annually to the UNRWA core budget and had recently provided US\$ 15 million in emergency relief to that Agency's education programme. In 2014, it had become a member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission. He called on the international community to make good on its pledges to remove all obstacles to development for people suffering under foreign occupation.

54. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was an ongoing humanitarian disaster and a human rights crisis. The most fundamental right, the right to life, was continuously violated by Israel. The people of Palestine should enjoy the basic rights of freedom, equality and an adequate standard of living. His delegation strongly condemned the Israeli activities

and policies of illegal occupation, which undoubtedly contravened the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and violated numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as international humanitarian law. The Palestinian people continued to suffer under occupation, and their persistent economic, fiscal, unemployment and food security problems were exacerbated by the divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

55. His delegation called on the international community to pursue policies that ensured respect for their obligations under international law with regard to all illegal Israeli practices and measures, particularly the settlement programme, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. His delegation further called on Israel to immediately halt the construction of the settlements and the wall, and to comply with its legal obligations pursuant to the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice. Israel should also remove the obstacles to the implementation of critical environmental projects, including a desalination facility and sewage treatment plant in Gaza, which were necessary for ensuring the health and well-being of the population, including access to clean water. The Palestinian people had a right to self-determination, the establishment of an independent State based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and sovereignty over their territory and its natural resources. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution submitted under the agenda item being discussed, and hoped that its adoption would alleviate the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian and Syrian populations living under Israel's foreign occupation.

56. **Mr. Chinyonga** (Zambia), congratulating the Palestinian people on the well-deserved right they had earned to fly their flag at United Nations Headquarters, said that the Palestinian Authority was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people's struggle to restore their sovereignty and establish a homeland of their own. Zambia supported all efforts to realize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Lasting peace would only be achieved when there were two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side. His delegation reaffirmed the validity of Security Council resolution

1397 (2002) and subsequent resolutions acknowledging that principle.

57. Generations of Palestinian refugees had been displaced in camps across the region for nearly 70 years. Time was running out for the survivors of the original displacement, but the remaining members of their families must be allowed to return to their ancestral lands. His delegation remained concerned over illegal actions by the Israeli State, including political, social, economic and human rights violations, which had resulted in continued suffering in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It further regretted that dozens of people had been killed and injured in October 2015 as a result of continuing instability, while homes and farmland had been destroyed. The suffering in all its forms must be brought to an end. The economic blockade and other restrictions, including the withholding of finances, should be lifted without any preconditions. The creation of Israeli settlements in the disputed territories must be halted and all Palestinian and Arab lands restored within pre-1967 borders. In conclusion, he stressed the urgent need for the two parties to return to meaningful dialogue and conform to the resolutions and agreements aimed at resolving the impasse.

58. **Mr. AlGhunaim** (Saudi Arabia) said that numerous United Nations reports had documented the arbitrary policies of the Israeli occupation, which included construction of the separation wall, settlement expansion, excessive use of force, home demolition, closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods. His delegation stressed that Jews had no rights whatsoever when it came to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound. The use of biblical place names for what was exclusively Islamic Arab Palestinian patrimony was a distortion of history. "Preserving the status quo" should mean maintaining conditions as they existed under the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate.

59. In 2002, the Kingdom had put forward the Arab Peace Initiative, under which every single Arab country had pledged to normalize relations with all other States in the region in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the occupied Syrian Golan and occupied Lebanese territory, as well as an agreed-upon settlement of the refugee problem. Israel must cease its theft of Palestinian land and water resources, put an end to its destruction of agricultural fields and pollution of the environment, and honour the resolutions that had been

adopted by the Committee. The Palestinian people had an inalienable right to the use of their natural resources and should be compensated for any damages caused by the illegal measures taken by Israel.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.