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President: Mr. Hoscheit (Vice-President) (Luxembourg)

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Non-governmental organizations (*continued*)
(E/2008/32 (Part I), E/2008/L.13 and E/2008/L.14)

Recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (continued) (E/2008/32 (Part I))

Draft decision II: Application of Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (continued)

1. **The President** recalled that at its previous meeting, the Council had taken a decision to resubmit draft decision II to a vote.

2. **Mr. Zainal Abidin** (Malaysia) said that in supporting the proposal to reopen the debate on the draft decision, his delegation had not meant in any way to undermine the work of the Secretariat. For the Council's work to be credible, it was necessary to take account of all delegations' concerns, but he encouraged the Bureau to look into ways to ensure that such issues did not affect the Council's work unduly in the future.

3. **Mr. Vandeville** (France) said that rule 57 of the Council's rules of procedure had clearly been applied in order to obtain a recount rather than to reopen the issue. His delegation wished to express its concern that such a precedent could prove damaging to the work of the Council in the future.

4. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan), speaking on a point of order, appealed to delegations to focus on the issue at hand rather than reopening a procedural debate.

5. **Mr. Vandeville** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union in explanation of vote before the voting, urged members of the Council to vote against the decision as discriminatory and unfounded. Moreover, it was neither unreasonable nor unprecedented to ask the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, a subsidiary body of the Council, to reconsider its decisions.

6. **Ms. Abdelhak** (Algeria), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that her delegation was in favour of denying consultative status to the non-governmental organization (NGO) in question. The members of the Committee were elected by the Council and, in order to determine whether or not a given NGO would contribute to the Council's

objectives, led an interactive discussion with it in a transparent process, the results of which must be respected if it was to retain legitimacy. Her delegation was not motivated by the issues promoted by the NGO itself.

7. *A vote was taken by roll-call on draft decision II.*

8. *Madagascar, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Benin, Cameroon, China, Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, Paraguay, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan.

Against:

Austria, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Abstaining:

Barbados, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Philippines, Saint Lucia.

9. *Draft decision II was rejected by 22 votes to 20, with 8 abstentions.*

10. **Mr. de Palacio España** (Observer for Spain) expressed thanks to members who had voted against the draft decision. The reasons put forward in its favour were unsubstantiated; the NGO had no other objective than to carry out its work in defence of human rights.

Draft decision entitled "Application of the non-governmental organization Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales" (continued) (E/2008/L.13)

11. **Mr. Mohamad** (Sudan) said it appeared that the draft decision would give the Council responsibilities, such as the granting of consultative status to NGOs, that were currently assigned to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

12. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the widest possible range of actors should be allowed to contribute to the work of

the Council. The NGO under consideration met the criteria for the granting of consultative status as most of its work was directly related to the goals of the United Nations. The Council's decision could not be based on discriminatory principles. He urged members to vote in favour of the draft decision.

13. At the request of the representative of Benin, a vote was taken by roll-call on draft decision E/2008/L.13.

14. Madagascar, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour:

Austria, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

Against:

Algeria, Belarus, Benin, Cameroon, China, Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, Paraguay, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan.

Abstaining:

Angola, Barbados, El Salvador, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Philippines, Saint Lucia.

15. *Draft decision E/2008/L.13 was adopted by 22 votes to 19, with 10 abstentions.*

Draft decision entitled "Application of the non-governmental organization Human Rights Foundation for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council" (E/2008/L.14)

16. **The President** recalled that at its previous meeting, the Council had voted to adopt the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations' recommendation that the Human Rights Foundation should not be granted consultative status (draft decision II, contained in document E/2008/L.9*). In light of that decision, he wondered whether the sponsor of draft decision E/2008/L.14, the United States of America, wished to withdraw it.

17. **Mr. Hagen** (United States of America) said that his delegation would indeed withdraw draft decision E/2008/L.14. However, he wished to stress that the statements made by the representative of Cuba at the previous meeting had consisted of an elaborately constructed façade. Since 1960, and especially at recent meetings of the Committee and the Council, the Cuban Government had used such actions to discredit Mr. Armando Valladares, who was internationally known for his defence of human rights, and to deny consultative status to the organization whose Board of Directors he chaired.

18. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba), speaking on a point of order, said that the representative of the United States of America should respect the views of all delegations.

19. **The President** asked the representative of the United States of America to conclude his statement.

20. **Mr. Hagen** (United States of America) said that, regrettably, the withdrawal of the draft decision would mean that neither the Committee nor the Council would have the opportunity to learn the truth about Mr. Valladares and his organization.

21. *Draft decision E/2008/L.14 was withdrawn.*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/63/61; E/2008/47 and E/2008/52; E/2008/L.17)

Regional cooperation (E/2008/15 and Add.1 and 2, E/2008/16, E/2008/17, E/2008/18, E/2008/19 and E/2008/20)

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2008/13)

22. **Mr. Nour** (Officer-in-Charge, Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2008/15 and Add.1 and 2), said that many of the policy and analytical issues raised in the report had been addressed in the Council's dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the five regional commissions during the high-level segment.

23. Chapter F of the report provided regional perspectives on major issues on the global agenda and a regional midpoint overview of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); inter and intraregional and rural-urban disparities; and the threat posed by new challenges, notably the rising costs of food and energy, which might halt or reverse the progress achieved.

24. The report reviewed the issue of financing for development as the international community prepared for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha Review Conference), to be held from 29 November to 2 December 2008. Priority issues and challenges were highlighted by regions. The outcome of regional consultations held between April and June 2008 had been transmitted to the President of the General Assembly for distribution to Member States, and were available to the Council.

25. Chapter I also drew attention to a number of regional initiatives to address the challenges of climate change and promote South-South cooperation as a vehicle for development and for reducing regional disparities. The regional commissions had assumed an active role in coordinating United Nations support for action on climate change at the regional level through the regional coordination mechanisms mandated by the Council in its resolution 1998/46 (annex III).

26. Chapter II of the report described efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration through the regional coordination mechanisms in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/62/208). In December 2007, during a visit to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Secretary-General had chaired the annual meeting of such a mechanism and had encouraged further integration of the work of the non-resident and regional agencies into national processes for development priorities.

27. The regional commissions had also intensified their efforts to harness their analytical capacities in support of country development. A cooperation framework agreement between the commissions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been signed in order to optimize their comparative advantages and seek complementarities and synergies

in their work. Since the previous session of the Council, four regional commissions had held annual or biennial ministerial sessions and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) had organized a number of area-specific ministerial meetings. An update on other relevant policy issues discussed during regional commission sessions and other high-level regional conferences and meetings was provided in the report.

28. Recent decisions and resolutions adopted by the commissions were presented in documents E/2008/15/Add.1 and 2. Three resolutions on which the Council would be required to take action, related to the restructuring of the conference structure ESCAP, the admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the decision of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to hold its thirty-third session in Brazil in 2010.

29. He then introduced the note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2008/13). The occupation of the Palestinian territory by Israel continued to deepen economic and social hardship. Mobility restrictions and closure policies remained a primary cause of poverty and humanitarian crises and restricted access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks.

30. Construction of the barrier had caused population displacement throughout the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem; approximately 25 per cent of Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem were separated from the city and from essential services to which they were entitled as residents. Continued settlement expansion further fragmented the West Bank into a series of isolated enclaves. The imposed closure hampered normal economic activity and was a main cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Export trade was particularly affected by the closure system, which raised transport costs for basic commodities.

31. The near-total isolation of Gaza since June 2007 had resulted in shortages of food, medical and relief items, spare parts for critical health and sanitation installations and raw materials for commerce and industry. The water supply and sanitation services in

the occupied Palestinian territory were insufficient and unreliable in quality. In 2007, the daily average of water consumption per capita had been 60 and 58 litres in the West Bank and Gaza, respectively, far below the minimum standard of 150 litres recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

32. Under Israeli occupation, the population of the Syrian Golan had declined from 130,000 in 1967, when many of the inhabitants had been expelled, to 21,000 Arabs and 20,000 Israeli settlers living in 45 illegal settlements, as at March 2007. The Arab population had experienced increasing restrictions on the exploitation of land and natural resources and had lost substantial land holdings traditionally used for pasture, adversely affecting production, commercial and land-use patterns.

33. At the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held in February 2008, the Secretary-General had reiterated the United Nations position that only a permanent political settlement which ended the occupation and gave Palestinians their independence could fundamentally alter their economic and humanitarian problems. He had stressed that the key ingredients for a breakthrough already existed, pointing to bilateral negotiations and donor support, and had said that with the right blend of wisdom, realism and political courage, historic progress towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, could be made.

34. **Ms. Hastings** (Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Assistance to the Palestinian People (E/2008/52), said that between May 2007 and April 2008, the Gaza Strip had experienced drastic economic decline and collapse of the private sector owing to its near-complete closure by Israel. However, the West Bank had witnessed modest recovery since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip and the formation of a new Palestinian Authority Government. There had also been significant progress in reform and pledges from international donors, in the amount of 7.7 billion dollars, over a three-year period for implementation of the new Palestinian Reform and Development Plan.

35. Those developments reflected the de facto political split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since June 2007. While bilateral political negotiations between the Government of Israel and the

Palestinian Authority had resumed after the November 2007 Annapolis Conference, there was still almost-daily rocket fire against Israeli targets in and around Gaza and Israeli aerial attacks and military incursions were frequent. A total of 998 Palestinians had been killed, 40 per cent of them as a result of internal Palestinian fighting. At the same time, militants in Gaza had launched over 1,900 rockets and mortars against communities in Israel, killing 23 Israelis. Despite large inflows of aid in recent years, at least 56 per cent of the Palestinian population lived below the poverty line, and food security and unemployment were matters of grave concern. United Nations studies over the previous year showed a significant deterioration in academic achievement by students, particularly in Gaza. Since the Hamas takeover in June 2007, industrial operations had been suspended; 33 per cent of Gazans were now unemployed and 80 per cent relied on United Nations food and other direct assistance.

36. The Government of Israel had further exacerbated the situation by reducing the amount of fuel allowed into Gaza, which, in turn, had interrupted the power supply and led to electricity cuts throughout the region. Commercial crossings into Israel were open for imports of international humanitarian and some categories of commercial goods. In some areas, access was permitted only for medical cases and a small number of merchants. Overall, impediments to movement in the West Bank had increased, and the barrier's planned route had been completed despite the advisory opinion against it rendered by the International Court of Justice in 2004.

37. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator continued to provide assistance to the Palestinian people. Emergency support formed the bulk of United Nations programme activities in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provided humanitarian aid through the 2008 consolidated appeal and facilitated projects led by NGOs through the Humanitarian and Emergency Response Fund. Food aid and emergency employment programmes had been provided by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in order to alleviate the plight of the refugee populations. The formation of the Government had encouraged many donors to resume their support to the Palestinian Authority and to focus on development activities. A

draft Palestinian reform and development plan had been prepared at the December 2007 Paris international donor conference, at which US\$ 7.7 billion had been pledged. The United Nations country team had agreed on strategic operational objectives that would provide the basis for a medium-term response to the Palestinian Authority's objectives over the next three years.

38. While preparing the draft plan, the country team had continued to implement development programmes and support the MDGs. UNRWA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided education-related services; the World Health Organization (WHO) offered its technical expertise by training Palestinian officials in child nutrition, safe water and hygiene; and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to mainstream human rights within the country team. UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) supported the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre in order to promote research on the history and current status of women in Palestinian society. ESCWA worked with the national statistical offices on the maintenance of a central repository for data on MDG reporting, and United Nations agencies cooperated with the Palestinian Authority in the development of joint proposals under the UNDP/Spain MDG Achievement Trust Fund.

39. The conflict, the occupation and the political divide between Gaza and the West Bank presented challenges to the delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. Emergency and humanitarian assistance was being rendered to a population that was otherwise ready for, and in need of, long-term development programming. Country teams were working closely with donors and the Palestinian Authority to ensure full implementation of the Palestinian reform and development plan. While the year ahead promised to be no less challenging, new opportunities could emerge if the commitments made by the two parties and the international community were met. Negotiations could open up new approaches and solutions with a view to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions, and to the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous

Palestinian state, living side by side in peace with a secure Israel.

40. **Ms. Hernández** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, said that the agenda item on implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations directly affected the peoples of most of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories that fell within the competence of the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, which benefited substantially from the various support schemes of the United Nations and its agencies in their efforts to achieve decolonization and full self-government. Full implementation of the relevant resolutions approved by the Council and the General Assembly in connection would be helpful to them in a number of development areas, particularly in improving their capacity to assume the responsibilities of self-government. In implementing the Declaration, the international community was helping foster the well-being of the peoples of the Territories and promoting political and socio-economic progress in speeding up the decolonization process.

41. To that end, her delegation had sponsored a draft resolution entitled "Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations" (E/2008/L.17). In that context, she drew attention to the report of the President of the Council on consultations with the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (E/2008/47), in which the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system described their activities related to implementation of the Declaration; and the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/63/61), which included a list of specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations that submitted information at the request of the Secretary-General.

42. In the past year, the United Nations system had continued to support the Territories in accordance with their respective mandates and had encouraged their

participation in the Organization's programmes and activities. That opportunity had brought an added dimension to integration of the Territories into the international community in terms of development and assistance. As it had done the previous year, her delegation wished to highlight the example of international support for Tokelau, which had continued its pursuit of decolonization with the full cooperation of New Zealand, the administering Power.

43. She welcomed the steady supply of informational material on United Nations assistance programmes that had been made available to the Territories and posted on the United Nations website on decolonization (<http://www.un.org/depts/dpi/decolonization/>) and recalled that the Council had supported the Department of Public Information's request for publication of that material.

44. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the more resolutions the United Nations adopted concerning the populations living in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan, the more the suffering of those populations, which had been living under Israeli occupation since 1967, increased. The Israelis were determined to continue occupying territory which was not their own and refused to recognize the teaching of history to the effect that however long occupation lasted, it had to end.

45. The note by the Secretary-General (E/2008/13), prepared by ESCWA, provided statistics that demonstrated the barbarous nature of the occupation and Israel's lack of respect for international humanitarian law and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The note made it clear that the leadership of the Israeli army committed crimes against humanity for which it should be held accountable forthwith. Furthermore, with the full knowledge of the international community, Israel had imposed a crippling economic embargo on the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and hindered the endeavours of the humanitarian agencies that were attempting to relieve the disastrous consequences of that embargo.

46. In defiance of repeated calls to desist by the international community, Israel continued to pursue its illegal policy of building settlements on occupied Palestinian territory, to exploit the territories' natural resources while denying the Palestinian people its right to enjoy them, and to expropriate and despoil

agricultural land and mature trees. Israeli policies had a serious impact on the health and food security of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

47. Since 1967, in flagrant defiance of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), Israel had continued to impose its laws on the occupied Syrian Golan, a decision which, as the resolution stated, was without international legal effect. It continued to expand its settlements there and to arbitrarily detain members of the local population. It denied international agencies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), access to those detainees, many of whose health was at serious risk. Of particular concern were the cases of Beshr al-Makt and the journalist Ata Farhat. Israeli landmines continued to constitute a threat to villagers in the occupied Golan and had claimed the lives of four children in 2006. As in the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel was expropriating and destroying agricultural land, exploiting the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan while denying the population the enjoyment thereof, and threatening the long-term viability of the environment by burying nuclear waste at a site on Mount Hermon.

48. Israel was also attempting to impose Israeli citizenship on the local Syrian population using such coercive tactics as denying workers access to employment. The employment conditions of the Syrian population were much less favourable than those of Israeli settlers.

49. The annual Council debate and report on such an important agenda item should have legal repercussions on the ground. His delegation called upon the Council's President to use the note to prepare a report on the situation in the Middle East for submission to the Security Council.

50. Council resolutions concerning the conditions of populations living under occupation sent a clear message to the peoples of the world that occupation was inconsistent with humanitarian law. His delegation condemned the stance of certain countries that supported human rights in various forums but objected strongly to including in resolutions any mention of the suffering and rights of peoples living under foreign occupation, in particular when those occupiers were the Israelis. There appeared to be two standards, one which was applied to most of the world and another designed

to protect Israel, whatever it did. Even if the Council was powerless to implement its resolutions, they had moral authority. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

51. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that it was important to consider the profound cumulative effects of Israeli practices and policies on the youth and future generations of Palestinians. For 41 years, Israel had enforced a policy of systematic destruction, targeting the social and economic fabric of the Palestinian people with complete impunity. That policy had gravely violated its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and other relevant international documents.

52. The most striking manifestation of that systematic policy was the continued construction of the illegal wall and of illegal settlements that now covered 40 per cent of the West Bank, despite the advisory opinion to the contrary issued by the International Court of Justice and the adoption of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 2 August 2004. Almost 90 per cent of the barrier penetrated deep into the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, destroying Palestinian land, resources and livelihoods in the process. Almost half a million Palestinians would be directly affected by the illegal wall and forced to endure a caged existence in isolated communities, while thousands more were suffering displacement, isolation, loss of property and income and, most importantly, loss of hope as they witnessed the confiscation of their land and property. Illegal settlements and infrastructure for Israeli use deprived Palestinians of the West Bank's most fertile land and water resources; the wall would annex 46 per cent of the West Bank's most valuable water sources.

53. The oppressive, colonial regime of the occupying Power was protected and preserved by a system of closure enforced through hundreds of checkpoints, roadblocks and gates that encroached on the Palestinian people's basic right to access and movement within their own territory. The policy of that apartheid-like regime effectively disrupted all aspects of daily economic and social life, including the ability of Palestinians to reach workplaces, schools and medical services. OCHA had cited Israel's restrictions as a primary cause of the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the World Bank had

repeatedly attributed the shrinking Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) to the regime's policies.

54. In the current global situation of soaring oil prices and food crisis, the Palestinian people confronted the double impact of hunger, imposed through siege, forced unemployment, loss of livelihood and destruction of property; and the rising prices of food and essential commodities. UNRWA had noted the dire food needs of the Palestinians and the alarming rise in extreme poverty. Fifty per cent of Palestinians in the occupied territory relied on donor food aid.

55. The direct and indirect consequences of the occupation covered all aspects of the social and economic life in the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem. The systematic colonization and oppression aimed at undermining development and eroding the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian population was a sinister policy that sought to drive Palestinians out of their homeland by imposing unbearable and inhumane conditions. The Palestinian people would, however, stay the course; they were deeply rooted in their land and would defy the odds of a brutal military occupation by insisting on a life of dignity, liberty and prosperity. Their perseverance was driven by their unshakeable conviction that the occupation of Palestine would suffer the fate of other occupations. At the same time, they called on the international community to uphold and protect the principles and achievements of humanity as embodied in the United Nations.

56. **Mr. Mohamad** (Sudan) said that despite deteriorating conditions, the Palestinian people clung to their dream of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. The practices of the Israeli occupying forces contravened international law, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Charter of the United Nations. Palestinians continued to be killed and wounded, and over 8,300 individuals were detained in Israeli prisons. Israel was forcibly displacing civilians, expropriating land, cancelling residence permits, restricting the movement of persons by means of crossing closures and preventing access to humanitarian aid. The separation wall was now over 703 kilometres long, and its construction continued despite the adoption of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 (2004).

57. The occupied Syrian Golan was being subjected by Israel to an economic and social embargo. The construction of settlements, imposition of collective

punishment and displacement of civilians all constituted violations of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations. The presence of landmines posed a threat to the inhabitants of Arab villages, and Israel had disposed of nuclear waste near Jabal al-Shaykh.

58. The Council had a responsibility to support the relevant United Nations agencies and other international organizations and to send urgent aid. Pressure should be put on Israel to comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in Paris in 1994; implement the Agreement on Movement and Access of 15 November 2005; restore and replace civilian properties; withdraw from all of the Arab territories occupied on or after 1967; recognize the right of return for Palestine refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948; and comply with internationally recognized humanitarian agreements.

59. **Mr. Zainal Abidin** (Malaysia) noted that the note by the Secretary-General (E/2008/13) vividly illustrated many examples of human rights violations and illegal actions committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. While he recognized the significance of recent developments such as the Gaza truce and the previous week's prisoner exchange, which it hoped would contribute to the Middle East peace process, there was still no movement by Israel towards dismantling the illegal settlements and the separation wall or ending the internal and external closure regime, as it was required to do under international law.

60. The ongoing construction of the separation wall was having a negative effect on social and economic life for the vast majority of Palestinians, who had to compete with Israeli settlers for limited resources such as land and water, and whose freedom of access and movement was restricted. Similarly, the extensive closure regimes, both internal and external, were a main cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation and impeded normal economic activities by restricting export trade and increasing the cost of transporting basic commodities. The growing population of Israeli settlers residing in the occupied territory, illegally and in contravention of Security Council resolutions, also constituted an obstacle to economic and social development.

61. The pattern of human rights violations and illegal actions on the part of Israel was systemic and pervasive. Through its collective voice, the international community must pressure Israel to respect international law and halt all its human rights violations and illegal actions. As the occupying Power, Israel must respect the rules of international humanitarian law and refrain from violence against the civilian population, in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Convention. The only way to alleviate the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people was through a permanent political settlement which would end the occupation and give the Palestinians their independence.

62. In its resolution 2007/26, the Council had stressed the importance of reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1544 (2005); the principle of land for peace; and compliance with the agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Council should continue to reiterate that call.

63. **Mr. Berdyaev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached considerable importance to strengthening regional cooperation and integration. The regional economic commissions were a key mechanism for providing development assistance guidelines, including for achievement of the MDGs, practical implementation of the Council's decisions and recommendations and convergence of the national economies of States of the region.

64. The regional commissions made a significant contribution to strengthening inter-State economic cooperation in such leading fields as energy, transport, agriculture, trade and environmental protection. In view of their extensive areas of internal expertise, the commissions also played an irreplaceable role in setting rules for inter-State cooperation with regard to transport, establishing agricultural quality standards and simplifying and harmonizing trade procedures. Despite the striking differences in regional development around the world, all the regional commissions should continue to focus on levelling the playing field for capacity-building and, in that connection, their human and financial resource needs should be sufficiently and fairly taken into account.

65. Notwithstanding the relatively high level of development of the pan-European region as a whole, the ECE should continue its useful efforts to provide direct technical assistance to countries in need, primarily in Central Asia, Transcaucasia and South-East Europe.

66. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the dialogue with the heads of the regional economic commissions during the current session of the Economic and Social Council, and particularly the steps taken by the regional economic commissions in response to the current food and energy crises. The regional commissions continued to be of relevance as neutral, non-politicized platforms for the taking of mutually acceptable decisions aimed at expanding economic cooperation and enhancing innovation and competitiveness among member States. For its part, the Russian Federation intended to further strengthen its ties with the regional economic commissions, particularly ECE and ESCAP, including with a view to providing additional expertise and resources for their activities. As from 2008, the Russian Federation intended to provide US\$ 1,200,000 in voluntary funds for ECE technical assistance programmes. Donor assistance to the regional commissions would also be increased as the Russian economy grew in strength.

67. The Russian Federation would continue to cooperate actively with the regional commissions in order to address the most acute socio-economic problems. In that connection, the Russian Federation, ECE and ESCAP would hold a series of joint events during the current year within the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

68. **Ms. Tobing** (Indonesia) said that the note by the Secretary-General painted a very bleak picture, concluding that the Israeli occupation was intensifying the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian and Syrian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan. Humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate and increased restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. That situation was particularly distressing given that nearly 85 per cent of the population of Gaza relied on food assistance from the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies. Among the most troubling factors was the combination of intensified closures and sanctions imposed by Israel and the increased

Palestinian internal conflict, which had led to a measurable deepening of the socio-economic crisis in the occupied territory in the previous year. In that connection, she welcomed the recent holding in Jakarta, of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) Ministerial Conference on Capacity Building for Palestine. The participation of 56 Asian and African countries, as well as several Latin American countries and international organizations, reflected the deep commitment of the NAASP countries to support for the Palestinian cause.

69. While the number of Israeli settlements in the Golan had increased to 45 by August 2007, the conditions of existence, education and employment of the remaining Syrian Arabs had continued to deteriorate. She recalled that according to resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Israeli decision to annex the Golan was null and void. The note only confirmed what was already known: the conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territory and the Syrian Golan had continued to deteriorate on account of Israeli policy, and there might never be peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians if those conditions persisted. Israel must reconsider and change its policies if it was ever to enjoy the confidence of the Palestinians and the international community. Peace in the Middle East had a chance only on the basis of a fundamental change in Israeli policy and implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map of the Quartet, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and respect for the principle of land for peace.

70. **Mr. Strigelsky** (Belarus) said that his Government attached considerable importance to strengthening European cooperation, particularly through ECE, which provided a unique forum for reflecting the optimum balance of interests of all European countries. Such cooperation was particularly important in the fields of energy, transport, innovation and trade facilitation. His Government also prioritized ECE efforts aimed at optimizing energy supplies, promoting long-term, balanced contractual relations and the search for environmentally friendly technologies.

71. As a landlocked country without significant amounts of natural resources, the Republic of Belarus attached particular importance to the development of international road and rail transport routes, the provision of transit transport services and the search

for promising markets for transport services. In that connection, his delegation supported the efforts of ECE and ESCAP to develop sustainable land transport networks in the region and noted that the transportation infrastructure of Belarus could play an important role in facilitating procedures for the carriage of goods and passengers through Eurasian corridors.

72. He noted with satisfaction that ECE had acquired considerable experience in trade facilitation and in the development of innovative economies, which were issues of particular interest to Belarus; practical efforts to make use of that experience at the national and regional levels should be prioritized. It was also important to find additional mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of regional cooperation, including with middle-income countries and countries with economies in transition.

73. The 2008 visit to Belarus by the Executive Secretary of ECE, Mr. Belka, in order to take part in the meeting of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), was seen by the Republic as an initial and very responsible step towards establishing a new model for regional cooperation. The socio-economic transformations of recent decades had not reduced the importance of ECE; it had brought new challenges instead. His Government stood ready to work with other countries to support the Commission's activities in the future.

74. **Mr. Benfreha** (Algeria) observed that the Israeli occupation continued to worsen the economic situation of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan and that the humanitarian crisis was worsening in the occupied territory, notably Gaza, as a result of isolation. The occupying Power had not respected the obligation, imposed by the Geneva Conventions, to guarantee access by humanitarian aid and assistance to the occupied territories. On the contrary, it persisted in its policy of applying draconian restrictions on the freedom of circulation, sealing off territories and confiscating territory, thereby restricting access by Palestinians to the basic services of health and education, to employment and to other social activities.

75. The building of the separation wall and the isolation of Jerusalem was a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention and of the fundamental rules of international law; moreover, it flouted the will of the international community as expressed in the advisory

opinion issued on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice, which had held that the wall was contrary to international law. Over and above its impact on national unity and the integrity of the Palestinian territory, the wall was impeding the normal economic and social life of the Palestinian people. Israel's closure of crossings to the transfer of goods was contrary to all the rules of international humanitarian law and world trade and considerably damaged the Palestinian economy, impeding development. In further violation of international humanitarian law, the occupying Power prevented the Syrian population of the Golan from enjoying the right to freedom of movement. More than ever, the international community was called upon to uphold its commitment to the Palestinian people and the population of the Golan and to reaffirm their inalienable right to their natural resources.

76. **Mr. Fluss** (Israel) reaffirmed Israel's shared vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, which was the ultimate goal of all. He regretted some of the statements made during the discussion and wished to register his disappointment at the politically motivated consideration of the single specific humanitarian issue of Palestine, when many similarly unique humanitarian situations were not addressed by the Council.

77. Assigning sole blame to Israel, without a single mention of the causes of its defensive actions, simply distorted the reality on the ground: rocket attacks on civilian populations, cynical attacks by Hamas and other terrorist organizations on border crossings supplying humanitarian aid, forced defensive closures and restrictions. Israeli citizens were being attacked on a daily basis from Gaza; only a few hours earlier, a bulldozer driven by a Palestinian had ploughed through cars and civilians in the streets of Jerusalem at the very time that President Peres and Chairman Abu Mazen had been meeting.

78. A thriving Palestinian economy was strongly in Israel's interests, as was an improved humanitarian situation. To that end, in the past month, Israel had transferred taxes and allowed an increased flow of humanitarian assistance, subject to the absence of terrorist attacks. Israel was working with the Palestinian Authority, in the belief that strengthening the moderates in Palestine was the best way forward towards peace and towards an improved economic,

social and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories.

Draft resolution entitled: "Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations" (E/2008/L.17)

79. **Ms. Hernández** (Cuba), introduced the draft resolution.

Recommendations contained in addendums 1 and 2 to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields: matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention (E/2008/15/Add.1 and 2)

80. **The President** drew attention to the recommendations contained in sections I (A) and (B) of Addendum 1 of E/2008/15/Add.1 and section I of Addendum 2 to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields: matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention (E/2008/15).

Draft resolution entitled "Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission" (E/2008/15/Add.1)

81. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Council), reporting on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution, said that in adopting the draft resolution, the Council would endorse the resolution on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), contained in Annex I thereto, as well as annexes II, III and IV on, respectively, the conference structure of the Commission; issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission; and the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission. Section II(B) of the report brought to the Council's attention the nine resolutions and two decisions adopted by ESCAP at its sixty-fourth session.

82. At the time of adoption of the draft resolution by ESCAP, in accordance with rule 23 of the latter's rules of procedure, the Secretariat had informed it that implementation of the requests made in the draft

resolution would require modification of the approved programme of work at the level of planned outputs in the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/6, section 18). The Commission had been informed of the number of outputs that would require adjustments, depending on the periodicity and length of the meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Accordingly the Council, by endorsing the draft resolution, would endorse modifications of the 2008-2009 programme budget. Annex I to the report of the Commission (E/2008/39) contained statements of the financial implications of the aforementioned resolutions and decisions, which remained valid and would not entail any additional appropriation for the biennium 2008-2009.

83. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft resolution entitled "Admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia" (E/2008/15/Add.1)

84. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft resolution entitled "Venue of the thirty-third session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" (E/2008/15/Add.2)

85. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

86. **Mr. Sadoski** (United States of America) said that while appreciating the contribution of the various regional commissions, his delegation would like to draw attention to the lack of standardized language used in draft resolutions welcoming requests by Governments to join the various commissions. For purposes of clarity and consistency, the Council should recommend the adoption of a standard formulation along the lines of "Welcoming all requests by Member States for membership in the regional Commission ...".

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (continued)

(a) Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (E/2008/67) (continued)

87. **Mr. Camara** (Observer for Guinea), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Leading Group on Solidarity Levies to Fund Development, expressed appreciation for the Seoul Consensus, which had made it possible for the African continent to hold two

presidencies of the group in succession — first Senegal and now Guinea — and thanked the Government of Senegal for its contribution to the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund, enlargement of the Leading Group and the promotion of innovative funding sources.

88. The Monterrey Consensus had clarified the term “financing for development” by highlighting its various and complementary components: internal and external resources, public and private resources, governance instruments and improved allocation of resources. However, implementation of the Monterrey Consensus fell far short of the commitments made. Efforts must be made to agree on policies and practices that would remedy the problems observed thus far. The overall goal had to be to ensure that the Doha Review Conference gave new impetus to the objectives that had been jointly set. The road to Doha would be a difficult and tortuous one, as seen from the difficulties encountered during negotiations, the issue of poor countries’ debt, climate change and the current food crises. The Leading Group looked forward to making its contribution to resolving those challenges.

89. Preparation for the Conference, and the Conference itself, should focus on the need to mobilize aid more effectively, the amount of official development assistance (ODA) that would be needed (perhaps double what was currently envisaged) and the dwindling amount of time remaining until 2015. As Chairman of the Leading Group, Guinea would be concentrating on two issues: consolidation of existing innovative financing mechanisms and projects, and promotion of new mechanisms; and enlarging and increasing the cohesion of the Group. Action to be taken in those areas included the holding of a national workshop on innovative financing and of negotiations aimed at converting observer countries into full members. Awareness-raising missions would also be conducted in countries of sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

90. It would be essential to demonstrate that innovative financing was a viable alternative for purposes of development financing. As Chairman of the Group, Guinea would be seeking assistance from the African Union and from subregional and other relevant bodies. It would also seek to establish close cooperation with the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Innovative Financing for Development.

Draft resolution entitled: “Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development” (E/2008/L.16)

91. **Mr. Segura** (Observer for Mexico) introduced the draft resolution, which requested the President of the Council to undertake consultations on the Council’s role in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus following the outcome of the Doha Review Conference. The penultimate line of paragraph 2 should read “... following the outcome of ...” rather than “... and the outcome of ...”.

Coordination, programme and other questions (continued)

(c) International cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2008/65)

Draft resolution entitled: “The need to harmonize and improve United Nations informatics systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States” (E/2008/L.18)

92. **The President** introduced the draft resolution and said that it had no programme budget implications.

93. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

(g) Tobacco or health (E/2008/59; E/2008/L.19)

94. **The President** invited the Council to begin its general discussion of the agenda item.

95. **Mr. Bettcher** (World Health Organization) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control (E/2008/59). The annual number of deaths from smoking was expected to increase to 8.3 million by 2030, with more than 80 per cent occurring in developing countries. Tobacco consumption was already responsible for many more deaths than HIV/AIDS. In 2008, WHO had launched a roadmap aimed at reversing the tobacco epidemic through six key measures. Tobacco use was more than just a health issue; hence the importance of a multisectoral approach to the problem through the collaboration of different agencies, particularly with regard to the implementation of tobacco control measures.

96. Second-hand smoke adversely affected health in many ways. The Task Force recommended that the United Nations should take a strong stance and that the Council should adopt the draft decision entitled

“Smoke-free United Nations premises” (E/2008/L.19), which recommended a complete ban on smoking and the sale of tobacco products at all duty stations, even though the General Assembly had taken no action on a similar draft decision in previous years.

97. Growing tobacco was a lucrative occupation, but it was an expensive crop to grow and had negative health and socio-economic implications. The search for alternative livelihoods should continue and the establishment of the Study Group on economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing by the Conference of Parties of the World Health Organization provided a platform for research and work in that area. The Task Force recommended that agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank should help advance the Study Group’s agenda of work since it was increasingly recognized that the cultivation of tobacco used much-needed arable land that could be better used for food crops.

98. Since the use of tobacco led to health, social and environmental problems and undermined efforts towards poverty reduction, it was essential for national development strategies to include tobacco control activities. Moreover, in many countries, companies were courting women by funding activities involving them; it was therefore important to address gender-specific aspects of tobacco use by conducting awareness-raising activities, especially through alliances with women’s groups.

99. Unfortunately, some tobacco companies had been able to join the United Nations Global Compact, which might enable them to promote their image as socially responsible corporations. The Task Force therefore recommended stronger collaboration between WHO and the Global Compact to monitor the activities of the industry.

100. The Conference of the Parties, which now numbered 157, had recognized the importance of the Task Force in implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and invited input from other United Nations agencies.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.