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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 353rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 30 July 2013, at 10.30 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Diallo (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chair** said that on 13 June 2013, Israel had announced it would go ahead with plans to build more than 1,000 homes in the Itamar and Bruchin settlements in the West Bank. On 27 June, in a press release marking the end of its recent fact-finding visit to Amman and Cairo, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories had noted with deep concern Israel's continued detention of an estimated 5,000 Palestinians, including children, as well as reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees. On 1 July, a Palestinian non-governmental organization had reported that in the first six months of 2013, 1,790 Palestinians had been arrested by Israeli soldiers and 16 had been killed by the Israeli military.

3. On 19 July, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Kerry, had announced in Amman that Israel and the State of Palestine had laid the groundwork for resuming peace talks. It had subsequently been confirmed that talks had officially resumed on 29 July in Washington, D.C. Also on 19 July, the European Commission had published new guidelines barring European Union agencies from funding entities connected to settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Lastly, on 23 July, the Security Council had held an open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at which he had made a statement on behalf of the Committee.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

4. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, had come at a critical and historic moment. The debate had focused on the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and on Israeli policies, including settlement activities, which did little

to facilitate meaningful political negotiations. While the international community and the Palestinian people and its leaders welcomed the resumption of peace talks and the Israeli decision of 28 July 2013 to release 104 Palestinian political prisoners held by Israel for more than 20 years, many believed that Israel must comply with international law if the talks were to succeed.

5. The resumption of talks had been facilitated by the efforts of the Committee, the League of Arab States, the Quartet, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United States Government, particularly its Secretary of State, who had visited the region six times in recent months. A procedural meeting in Washington, D.C would establish a timetable for talks, but the real test lay ahead, and success would depend on the political will of both sides. Since the General Assembly had granted Palestine non-member observer State status on 29 November 2012, Palestinian leaders had acted responsibly and flexibly. Rather than applying to become a high contracting party to the Geneva Conventions or other international instruments, thus giving Israel another excuse not to resume negotiations, they had decided to delay decisions on matters not related to the political process. The current political negotiations, which could be the last opportunity to save the two-State solution, must cover all issues, including the question of settlements, land grabs and other illegal Israeli activities in and around East Jerusalem. Palestine intended to uphold international law and to honour its obligations and commitments; he hoped that Israel would do the same.

6. He welcomed the publication of the European Commission guidelines, which reiterated that bilateral agreements between the European Union and Israel did not cover territory occupied by Israel in 1967. While those guidelines would not come into effect until 2014, they nevertheless marked an important step forward, not to mention a potential means to bring the occupying Power into compliance with international law. He condemned Israel's retaliatory decision to not allow the representative of the European Union to visit Gaza, and hoped that it would not set the tone for the peace talks.

7. The Occupied Palestinian Territory was not mere contested land, and the occupying Power must withdraw from it as a precondition for peace. Palestinian leaders stood ready to negotiate all outstanding issues, including water rights, borders,

settlements and prisoners. He hoped that those who were sceptical of the current talks would be proved wrong, and that the Palestinian people could look forward to an end to the occupation.

8. **Mr. Ahmed Khan** (Pakistan) welcomed the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the State of Palestine and commended the efforts of the negotiators and the Secretary of State of the United States of America. Time was running out; the number of Israeli settlements had doubled since 2000 and the demographic balance was shifting. A clear timeline and goals for the negotiations should therefore be established.

9. He welcomed the Israeli decision to release Palestinian prisoners and called for more confidence-building measures, such as easing movement restrictions and freezing settlement activities. It was imperative that both sides should show patience and prudence. In the meantime, the rights of the Palestinian people should be respected, all actions should be anchored in international law and violent tendencies should be curbed.

Report on the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Beijing, 18 and 19 June 2013

10. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba), Vice-Chair, said that the theme of the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held on 18 and 19 June 2013 in Beijing, had been “Reviving the collective international engagement towards a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”, which had been extremely timely in the light of new international and regional initiatives to help restart negotiations. The Meeting had been attended by representatives of 56 Governments, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 2 United Nations system entities and a number of civil society organizations. It had been covered by 22 major Chinese and international news organizations. The Committee had been represented by a delegation made up of the Chair, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, and himself.

11. The opening session had included a message from the Secretary-General, which had welcomed renewed efforts by the United States and the League of Arab States and had called on the parties to avoid actions that would jeopardize negotiations, such as settlement expansion. The Secretary-General had also called for

confidence-building measures and additional support for the Palestinian people, its institutions and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Ma Zhaoxu, had elaborated on the four-point proposal put forward by President Xi Jinping during visits by President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu to China in May 2013.

12. In his opening statement, the Chair of the Committee, noting that China was uniquely placed to contribute to a solution, had called on the international community to launch a collective push to remove the obstacles to negotiations, support peace talks, coordinate initiatives, rebuild confidence and increase assistance to the Palestinian people. The representative of the State of Palestine, Bassam al-Salihi, had welcomed China’s support and stressed that if the international community allowed the current initiatives to fail, it would lose the opportunity for a two-State solution and would have to seek alternatives. In a keynote presentation, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Oscar Fernández-Taranco, had expressed hope that the international community would help both parties to overcome mistrust and to engage in meaningful negotiations, as the status quo was unsustainable.

13. Discussions during the plenary sessions had focused on the need to give current diplomatic efforts a chance. In that connection, support from key players, including China, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, would be vital. Donors had been called upon to step up assistance, particularly to UNRWA. Participants had stressed the responsibility of the States Members of the United Nations to address Israeli violations and to support the independence of the State of Palestine. Should current diplomatic efforts stall, the Palestinian people would consider other options, including peaceful popular resistance and applying to join international organizations and instruments. The possibility had been raised of putting forward United Nations resolutions that included concrete measures to curb Israeli violations. All of the relevant documentation could be found on the web page of the Meeting, and a full report would be issued.

14. Lastly, the Committee delegation had held fruitful and open exchanges of views with high-level officials from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the Minister. The delegation had also attended an event organized by the Embassy of the

State of Palestine and the Council of Arab Ambassadors to commemorate the anniversary of Al-Nakba.

15. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that he was grateful to the Government of China for hosting the meeting and hoped that it would play a more active role in the political process to advance peace.

16. *The Committee took note of the report.*

Request by the Plurinational State of Bolivia to become a member of the Committee

17. **The Chair**, with reference to a letter dated 29 May 2013 from the Permanent Mission of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations, said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the request by the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to become a member of the Committee.

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **Mr. Llorenty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his country was honoured to become a member of the Committee. The Palestinian people was the victim of aggression, colonization, oppression and collective punishment, and its struggle was one of the great causes of the twenty-first century. It was an issue of global significance: world peace, freedom, self-determination and the rule of international law were at stake. His country supported the two-State solution on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967 and strongly urged Israel to halt all settlement construction.

20. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the Bolivian people and their President, together with other peoples and countries of Latin America, were committed to supporting the Palestinian struggle. He called on the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to make a firm commitment to resolving their dispute; it was unacceptable that one party to the conflict was seeking to maintain the status quo and continuing to violate the rights of the Palestinian people.

21. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the State of Palestine looked forward to strengthening its relations with the Plurinational State of Bolivia and deeply appreciated all efforts to support Palestinian rights.

22. **Mr. Eler** (Turkey) said that his country looked forward to working with the Plurinational State of Bolivia and to the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Recommendations for enhancing the Committee's cooperation with civil society organizations: reactivation of the Working Group of the Committee (working paper No. 4)

23. **The Chair** said that 830 civil society organizations were accredited with the Committee, and 99 of them enjoyed observer status. The Bureau held periodic consultations with representatives of civil society organizations, and their relations had proved mutually beneficial. The Bureau had made a number of recommendations aimed at improving such interaction. In particular, it had recommended that the Working Group of the Committee, which had been established in 1977, should be reactivated and entrusted specifically with reaching out to civil society. Malta had offered to resume its function as chair of the Working Group.

24. He drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 4, which set forth the draft terms of reference of the Working Group.

25. **Mr. Hamilton** (Malta) proposed that, in paragraph 2 of the draft terms of reference, the words "better use" should be replaced with "harness" and, at the end of paragraph 3 (b), the phrase "and raising mutual awareness of respective efforts, initiatives and opportunities for mutual cooperation" should be added.

26. *The draft terms of reference of the Working Group, as orally amended, were adopted.*

Accreditation of civil society organizations with the Committee (working paper No. 5)

27. **The Chair** drew the Committee's attention to working paper No. 5, which contained applications for accreditation that had been submitted by five non-governmental organizations. After reviewing the applications, the Bureau had concluded that the five organizations fulfilled the criteria for accreditation and recommended that they should be accredited.

28. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) said that the Perdana Global Peace Foundation, which had been founded by Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, had implemented numerous

humanitarian and infrastructure programmes in various parts of the world, including Gaza. His Government urged the Committee to approve its request.

29. The requests for accreditation to the Committee received from the El Bureij Rehabilitation Society (Gaza Strip), the Society for Development and Community Empowerment (Nigeria), the Himalayan Consensus Institute (Hong Kong), the Perdana Global Peace Foundation (Malaysia) and the US Federation for Middle East Peace (United States of America) were approved.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.