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

Summary record of the 396th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 4 September 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Niang (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Consideration of the draft annual report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2019/CRP.2)

2. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2019/CRP.2), which had been distributed to the Committee members prior to the meeting and covered the work of the Committee between 6 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, said that the draft report gave prominence to the work of the Committee in line with the United Nations resolutions and international law that informed its mandate. She provided a brief summary of the draft report and its key recommendations.

3. *The draft report was adopted.*

4. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the established practice, the adopted report would be transmitted to the Secretary-General for submission to the General Assembly.

5. **Mr. Naeemi** (Afghanistan) said that the adopted report was a good basis for the programme of work of the upcoming year.

6. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta), echoing the sentiments expressed by the representative of Afghanistan, said that the adopted report encapsulated the conditions on the ground in the State of Palestine. He proposed that a paragraph be added to reflect the position of the Committee with regard to future prospective scenarios given the fluidity of the political climate in the country.

7. **Mr. Awawdeh** (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) proposed that a line be added to chapter 5 of the report stating that the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem, held in Geneva on 27 and 28 June 2019, had been organized in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Update on Committee activities and consideration of upcoming activities

8. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that the Committee had organized the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine in New York on 3 April 2019 under the theme “the threat of de facto annexation – what next for Palestine?” During the forum, participants had emphasized the impact of Israeli occupation and annexation policies on daily life in the Occupied

Palestinian Territory and its detrimental effect on the prospects of a two-State solution and a peaceful resolution to the question of Palestine. Recommendations had been made for the international community to increase pressure on Israel to comply with Security Council resolutions and international law and for Member States to adopt legislative measures preventing commercial activities in and with Israeli settlements. At closed consultations prior to the forum, civil society representatives from Palestine, Israel and the United States had recommended that the Committee, its members and observers continue to publicly support civil society organizations and oppose the criminalization of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

9. During the Palestine Day on the Hill event organized by the Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians on 4 April 2019, the Chair of the Committee had highlighted the important role of parliaments in representing the will of the people and had demanded accountability and compliance with international law. The Chair and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations had met the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada in New York before the event.

10. On 28 May 2019, to raise awareness of the plight of Palestine and foster support among United Nations regional groups, the Bureau had briefed the Group of African States in New York on the priorities of its mandate and upcoming activities.

11. At its fifth annual retreat on 21 June 2019, the Bureau had discussed challenges that affected the Committee and its work, priorities and activities for the 2019–2020 period, including messaging and outreach, and the strategy for upcoming activities. The Bureau had acknowledged that, although the international community was generally still committed to the two-State solution, the Committee was at a critical juncture in which there was an unprecedented shift away from long-standing international consensus. The Bureau had agreed that the Committee should intensify collaboration within the United Nations, especially with the General Assembly and the Security Council, Permanent Representatives, regional groups and the general public.

12. On 24 and 25 June 2019, the Committee had held meetings in Berlin with government officials, members of parliament and experts on the Middle East, at which it had requested Germany to maintain its position, based on international law, with respect to unilateral measures, and to adhere to relevant United Nations resolutions so that such measures would not become the new norm. The representatives of Germany had said that they

supported the multilateral consensus on the question of Palestine, including the rejection of efforts to annex Palestinian territory. Germany, in line with the European Union, was committed to a two-State solution. It would continue providing funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

13. On 27 and 28 June 2019, the Committee had organized the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at the United Nations Office at Geneva, with a focus on the preservation of the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem. Participants had discussed the impact of Israeli efforts to change the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem, including the impact on the possibility of a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. The following key conclusions were drawn from the Conference: a decision on the legal status of Jerusalem would be possible only through a political settlement between the State of Palestine and Israel; Palestinian efforts to preserve the character of the city should be maintained; the status of Jerusalem should be enshrined in international law, rather than through religious narratives; and the international community should exert pressure on Israel to allow access to holy sites in Jerusalem for the purpose of monitoring, Israeli excavations and the demolition of cultural monuments for tourism-related purposes. On the margins of the Conference, the Committee delegation had also held bilateral meetings with the President of the Human Rights Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, at which critical issues had been discussed, such as the possibility of publishing a database of companies carrying out economic activities in the illegal Israeli settlements and applying pressure on the Human Rights Council with regard to its agenda item on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

14. On 13 July 2019, representatives of the Committee had visited the Palestine Museum US located in Woodbridge, the United States, to celebrate Palestinian cultural and artistic achievements. The delegates representing the Committee had had the opportunity to hear a lecture on Palestinian paintings and view art by a renowned Palestinian artist and scholar. The enthusiastic response by participants demonstrated the need to support the State of Palestine not only through the work of the United Nations, but also through the preservation of Palestinian heritage.

15. The annual meeting between the Bureau and the Secretary-General had been held on 24 July 2019.

Acknowledging their shared goals, both parties had pledged to do their utmost to ensure sustained financial support for UNRWA and promote unity among Palestinians and the peace process. The Secretary-General had underscored the importance of commitment to the international consensus on a two-State solution. The implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the increasing destruction of houses and the seizure of funds sent to the Palestinian Authority were also considered.

16. In June 2019, the Division for Palestinian Rights had completed a three-year-long project to migrate the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine to a more modern platform. The website, which received over 300,000 visits per year, contained substantial United Nations information on the issue and updates on the Committee's activities. The Division would continue developing the website, such as by enhancing multilingualism and improving the user experience.

17. **The Chair** said that he would represent the Committee at the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, organized by the Department of Global Communications, in Ankara on 11 and 12 September 2019. In mid-September, the Division for Palestinian Rights would organize a capacity-building workshop for Palestinian government staff on the topic of strategic communication. The workshop would be run in several phases to allow relevant staff to take part in sessions tailored to their respective ministries. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the concept note for that workshop.

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said the capacity-building workshop was a very good initiative but should reflect lessons learned during recent visits by the Committee. For example, during the Committee's visit to Brussels, one member of the European Parliament had stated that she had not been sufficiently exposed to issues related to Palestine. Furthermore, during the Committee's visit to Berlin, a representative of a think tank had indicated that 60 per cent of the German population, particularly young people, did not agree with the German Government's stance on Palestine. It would therefore benefit the Palestinian cause for the Committee to focus the workshop on engaging young people and employing appropriate communication techniques.

20. **The Chair** said that from 4 to 5 October 2019, the Committee would organize a two-day closed-door seminar, in collaboration with the Irish Centre for Human Rights, on third-party State responsibility in modern international law. The seminar was expected to

lead to recommendations on how to counter the de facto annexation of Palestinian land and reverse Israeli settlements. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the concept note and tentative schedule for the workshop.

21. *It was so decided.*

22. The Committee would arrange a five-day visit to Senegal from 21 to 25 October 2019 to allow Palestinian hydrologists and certain officials to study and exchange international best practices in water management. In that area of West Africa, a number of countries were working closely to manage their common water supplies. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the concept note for the visit.

23. *It was so decided.*

24. During the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Division would organize six weeks of training sessions for Palestinian diplomats on the topic of multilateral diplomacy. The training sessions, like the ones held the previous year, would enable two Palestinian representatives to familiarize themselves with the United Nations and its work, particular with regard to the question of Palestine.

25. The Committee would meet in mid-November 2019 to approve draft resolutions on the question of Palestine. In celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 26 November 2019, the Committee would hold a special meeting that would be attended by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council. He encouraged Heads of State and Government and observer States to send messages of solidarity to mark the occasion. The Committee would send invitations to all Member States and observer States and various representatives of Palestinian and Israeli civil society.

Update by the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

26. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there had been an intensification of illegal settlement activities by the extreme-right Government of Israel, which were in contradiction with Security Council resolution 2234 (2016) and other relevant Security Council resolutions. Letters had been sent to the Security Council documenting and condemning such activities, including the demolition of homes in East Jerusalem and Area A, which had led to the displacement of many Palestinians. Extreme settler

groups, with support from the Government of Israel, had been responsible for the recurrent desecration of the Haram al-Sharif, where confrontations had led to injuries and the arrest and detention of a large number of both Muslim and Christian Palestinian worshippers. The intensification of settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the military operations in Gaza had compounded the problems and suffering of the inhabitants of the besieged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

27. In the midst of the election campaign in Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had embarked on highly offensive actions, such as visiting settlements close to Ramallah and Hebron, in an attempt to appease extreme settlers and right-wing elements within Israeli society and receive as many votes as possible.

28. With regard to the position of the international community, a debate had been held at the Security Council on 23 July 2019, during which 14 of the 15 members of the Security Council had reiterated the common position held by the international community that there was no Plan B for a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, the end of the occupation of East Jerusalem and a just solution to the refugee problem on the basis of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. That position had been repeated many times over the past 25 years by the international community, with the exception of Israel and the United States of America, which had insisted in deviating from the global consensus.

29. In response to the question posed by the representative of Malta on whether the Committee should include in its adopted report its position on future prospective scenarios, he said that there was no need for the Committee to speculate on and react to ideas that were on the fringes of global consensus. Instead, the Committee should continue to defend the global consensus honourably, as defined by its mandate and as supported by the international community.

30. Security Council resolutions were binding international law aimed at maintaining international peace and security. However, there had been onslaughts on that position from the United States, which had significantly violated international law in December 2017 by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel and moving its embassy to that city in complete defiance of international law and Security Council resolutions. The Committee had been successful in deterring others, with the exception of three Member States, from joining the position of the United States. In that regard, it was a collective responsibility to remind Member States of the need to defend international law

and to honour Security Council resolutions concerning Jerusalem and the question of Palestine.

31. The Committee was playing a remarkable role in defending the global consensus, in accordance with its mandate and in defence of international law, including Security Council resolutions. In that regard, work was being carried out with all components, including the Arab Group, the African Group, the Latin America and Caribbean Group, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the European Union, to maintain support for the global consensus and all resolutions related to the question of Palestine.

32. On the political front, UNRWA had received significant support. The Secretary-General was leading efforts to make the agency an utmost priority of the United Nations system and to renew its mandate in the Fourth Committee for three years. A total of \$400 million had been raised in 2018 to bridge the UNRWA deficit gap, and another \$200 million was required during 2019 for the same purpose. Four Arab countries from the Gulf region had played a very important role in bridging around 50 per cent of the deficit gap and were urged to contribute generously again in 2019 to defend UNRWA financially and allow it to continue its activities until a just, comprehensive solution was found to the question of Palestine.

33. In the context of the Israeli election, it was a collective responsibility to defend the global consensus concerning the Palestinian people, to continue to undertake the programmes described in the draft annual report of the Committee to the General Assembly and to contribute to UNRWA financially.

34. He hoped that the Israeli occupation would come to an end, allowing for the independence of the State of Palestine and the implementation of a two-State solution. The Committee, with the help of every Member State with an interest in attaining peace and security, should seek to improve the situation. It was necessary to bring an end to the division of the land and political system of the Palestinian people.

35. **The Chair** said that the violations committed by Israel were unacceptable. Attempts had been made to blur the truth by demonizing the Palestinian fight for dignity, and even the actions of the Committee and the General Assembly, despite the fact that their mandates had been agreed upon by global consensus. The Committee had a duty to remain mobilized and continue its important work by reminding partners of their responsibilities to respect the global consensus.

36. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Ecuador) said that he wished to remind participants of two historical events. First, the Committee had been established by the General Assembly in 1975 to recommend a programme of implementation to enable Palestinians to exercise certain inalienable rights. Nevertheless, its work, as outlined in the draft annual report and on the basis of its annual programme of work, was clearly not sufficient, since his delegation had received reports of violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the confiscation of Palestinian land and ongoing illegal settlement activity pursued by the Government of Israel. Second, in 1947, the Assembly had adopted resolution [181 \(II\)](#), which provided for the establishment in Palestine of independent Arab and Jewish States, with Jerusalem as a corpus separatum under a special international regime. Of the two States, only Israel had been established. As a result of the Israeli occupation, the political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate, with violations of human rights, a humanitarian crisis and socioeconomic difficulties. The entire Middle East was threatened by the escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and there were few prospects for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being resolved on the basis of a two-State solution. Indeed, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority had informed the Security Council in August 2019 that unilateral actions on the ground, such as the construction and expansion of settlements, had created an explosive situation.

37. It was important to renew the historic commitment to the cause of peace in the Middle East and support international efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and in accordance with the international law. Ecuador had formally recognized the State of Palestine in 2010 and maintained diplomatic ties with it and positive bilateral exchanges. Ecuador had also signed an agreement with the State of Palestine in March 2019 to strengthen cooperation and cultural, intellectual and artistic exchange between the two countries. In July 2019, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador had received a visit from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, during which they had discussed the bilateral agenda and possible South-South cooperation, as well as signing three agreements on agricultural, sports and young people. They had also analysed possibilities for bilateral work in various fields. Ecuador had voted in favour of the nine resolutions on the Palestinian cause that had been adopted by the General Assembly in 2018. In addition, it had joined the sponsors of resolution related to

UNRWA and had expressed its full support for the Agency's mandate.

Update by members and observers of the Committee

38. **Mr. Alhakbani** (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that the draft annual report of the Committee, alongside various other United Nations reports, indicated that Israel continued to violate resolutions and inflict suffering on the Palestinian people. Saudi Arabia prioritized the question of Palestine in its foreign policy and endeavoured to help the Palestinian people to build an independent State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the agreed points of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. In July 2019, Saudi Arabia had hosted thousands of families of Palestinian martyrs during hajj. In the same month, his Government had denounced the destruction of houses by Israeli occupation forces in Sur Bahir, an area east of Jerusalem inhabited by thousands of Palestinians, as a violation of international humanitarian law. At the thirty-seventh meeting of the 2019 session of the Economic and Social Council, a representative of Saudi Arabia, speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, had called on the international community to provide Palestinian people with the protection they need and to put an end to Israeli violations of Islamic and Christian holy places and destruction of Palestinian homes.

39. **Mr. Inguanez** (Malta) said that his Government had once again offered scholarships to Palestinians. Three students had been selected and would soon be able to help their compatriots and the State of Palestine by embarking on Masters degrees in his country.

40. **Mr. Aidid** (Malaysia) said that the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Perdana Global Peace Foundation had proposed for an event to be held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2019 that would be co-hosted by the Committee.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.