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Chair: Mr. Menelaou (Vice-Chair)..... (Cyprus)

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In the absence of Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia), Mr. Menelaou (Cyprus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 63: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/72/90-E/2017/71)

1. **Mr. Alhakim** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), introducing the report prepared by ESCWA entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” (A/72/90-E/2017/71), said that 70 years had elapsed since the partition of Palestine and 50 years since its occupation. Serious concerns remained about the use of force and unlawful killings by Israeli security forces, including cases that could have amounted to extrajudicial executions. It was unclear whether those killed had posed a level of threat warranting the use of deadly force.

2. During the reporting period, from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, 63 Palestinians, including 19 children, had been killed by Israeli army and security forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Approximately 2,276 others had been injured, including 562 children. At least 37 of the Palestinians killed had been carrying out or had been suspected of carrying out attacks against Israelis. Twelve Israelis, including 7 civilians, had been killed in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and 162 had been injured in attacks by Palestinians. From 4 April 2016 to 20 March 2017, there had been 39 violent settler-related incidents that had resulted in Palestinian casualties and 73 Israeli settler attacks resulting in damage to Palestinian properties in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities had continued the practice of delaying the return of the bodies of Palestinians who had carried out, or were alleged to have carried out, attacks. Such practice could amount to a collective punishment against the families of the deceased and could be contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

3. By January 2017, approximately 6,500 Palestinians were being held in Israeli prisons, including 300 children, and 536 Palestinians remained under administrative detention. More than 15,000 Palestinian women had at some point been detained by Israeli authorities since 1967. The number of children in detention, including children under the age of 12, had

declined from 440 in February 2016 to 335 in February 2017.

4. The United Nations Committee against Torture had expressed concerns about Israeli practices towards Palestinian detainees, including minors. Such practices included deprivation of basic legal safeguards for administrative detainees; isolation and solitary confinement of detainees, including minors; punishment and ill-treatment of hunger strikers; torture or ill-treatment of Palestinian children; and the hindering of visits of relatives for child prisoners. No criminal investigations had been opened into more than 1,000 complaints of torture or ill-treatment filed since 2011.

5. During the reporting period, Israeli authorities had demolished 726 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 1,122 Palestinians had been displaced as result of home demolitions. Israeli settlement policies violated Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), and international law. The settler population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, had doubled since the Oslo Accords, reaching over 594,000 persons. According to data from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, construction had begun on 2,630 new settler homes in West Bank settlements in 2016, a 40 per cent increase compared to 2015.

6. The closures in Gaza, which had significantly tightened after Hamas took over the area in 2007, together with successive military confrontations since then, had exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and had severely undermined any development efforts. Throughout 2016, the Rafah crossing had remained closed, with the exception of 44 days. Forty-four per cent of West Bank land was off-limits to Palestinian construction and development. By mid-December 2016, there had been 472 obstacles to movement in the West Bank. Israel continued to construct the “barrier” in the West Bank, contrary to the 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion.

7. The population of Gaza continued to suffer from the repercussions of the 2014 military conflict. Constraints on the rehabilitation of infrastructure had left 23 per cent of Gazans disconnected from the sewage network. Damage to electricity gridlines and fuel and electricity shortages had contributed to a chronic electricity and fuel deficit in Gaza over the previous 10 years. During January 2017, about 2 million Palestinians had been left with three hours of electricity per day. The chronic electricity deficit had further exacerbated the water crisis in Gaza, as it affected more than 300 water and wastewater facilities, which had resulted in an inadequate and irregular water supply and in untreated

sewage that overflowed into the streets or the sea. In the West Bank, difficulties in obtaining Israeli permits for activities related to constructing or rehabilitating Palestinian water infrastructure contributed to denying Palestinians their right to access water. By June 2016, daily average water consumption by Palestinians in the West Bank was 73 litres per capita per day, well below the rate of 100 litres recommended by the World Health Organization and drastically lower than the 240 litres to which Israelis had access.

8. The economy of Palestine had contracted sharply during the second half of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, in the aftermath of the last Gaza military conflict. Since then, the economy had continued to recover, with stable growth and subdued inflation. There were sharp differences in living conditions between Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In spite of recent high growth rates in Gaza, the 2014 conflict had exacerbated the divergence between that area and the West Bank. The persistently high unemployment rate in Gaza showed that the labour market was still struggling to recover from the fallout of the 2014 escalation.

9. Although improvements had been registered in recent years, food insecurity remained high in Palestine. Food security was hampered by the closure of the Gaza Strip and the movement restrictions in the West Bank. A food security crisis in Gaza had only been averted owing to large-scale humanitarian assistance. More than 70 per cent of Gaza's residents received some form of international aid, the bulk of which was food assistance. The population that received food aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had grown more than tenfold from 2000 to 2016, rising from fewer than 80,000 to over 960,000 persons. Food insecurity in refugee households had reached 22 per cent compared to 14 per cent for non-refugee households.

10. In 2016, grave education-related violations had continued to restrict the right of children to access education safely in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNRWA reported that 75 per cent of schools in Gaza had continued to operate on a double-shift basis in 2016. Refugee children had fewer opportunities to engage in recreational and creative pursuits than students attending single-shift schools.

11. In Gaza, closures had severely affected the availability and quality of health-care services. The overcrowded living conditions and substandard housing there had also heightened public health risks associated with improper solid waste disposal at dumping sites and standing wastewater, especially near refugee camps. In the West Bank, Palestinians must obtain permits for each

health appointment that required travel to Jerusalem or neighbouring countries and were often delayed or denied such permits, often without being given a reason.

12. In its resolution 497 (1981), the Security Council had decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect, and had demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision. According to the Syrian Arab Republic, Israeli authorities had restricted Syrian usage of land to 18,000 hectares, while Israeli settlers were allowed to utilize 140,000 hectares (A/HRC/34/37, para. 24). The International Labour Organization maintained that the allocation of water for Syrian farmers was limited to 200 m³ per 1,000 m², which was liable to be reduced owing to drought, while settlers received between 600 and 800 m³ and, in practice, as much as they required. Meanwhile, settlement expansion by Israeli authorities in the occupied Syrian Golan had continued during the reporting period in violation of international law (A/HRC/34/39, para. 58). Israeli and foreign-owned companies had continued to explore and exploit natural resources, including water, gas and oil resources, after receiving licences from the Israeli authorities (A/70/406, para. 25).

13. Fifty years of occupation of Palestinian and Syrian lands had created severe limitations on social and economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. The impact of Israeli policies and practices on the Palestinian people, society and economy, in particular, was multilayered and had accumulated over the decades of occupation. Adherence to international law was imperative, ensuring that no party enjoyed impunity and securing justice and peace for all the peoples in the region, including the Palestinian and Syrian populations under occupation.

14. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the current report contained 16 pages and 92 paragraphs, which represented a 16 per cent decrease in the total number of words compared with the report of the previous year (A/71/86-E/2016/13).

15. Misleading language could be found in a number of places in the report. For example, paragraph 6 included the phrase "although hundreds of small-scale plans were approved for Palestinians in recent years". The source of that information, however, had been a report of the Israeli non-governmental organization Bimkom, in which the word "hundreds" had in fact been used three times to criticize Israeli policies toward Palestinians.

16. Paragraph 9 of the current report had taken the Israeli side in justifying the killing of Palestinians as follows: “At least 37 of the Palestinians killed were carrying out or suspected of carrying out attacks against Israelis”. The language in paragraph 17 of the previous report, however, had read “many of whom were killed while allegedly carrying out attacks against Israelis”. His delegation had requested ESCWA to again include the word “allegedly”. Unfortunately, the current report represented a step backwards.

17. Paragraph 11 of the current report was also fully in line with Israeli opinion in stating that Palestinians who had committed attacks against Israelis had been glorified, including by representatives of ruling parties. The use of “glorified” was a stereotype used by the Israelis and there was no reference to the source of that language.

18. Paragraph 15 of the current report stated that the practice of delaying the return of Palestinian bodies of persons who had carried out or were alleged to have carried out attacks against Israelis “may be contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention”. However, paragraph 25 of the report prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/71/364) clearly stated that “the withholding of bodies is inconsistent with Israel’s obligations as an occupying Power pursuant to the Fourth Geneva Convention (articles 27 and 30) and violates the prohibition on torture and ill-treatment”.

19. The reference in paragraph 22 to the demolition of Palestinian homes as a policy “which targets the family homes of Palestinians convicted or suspected of carrying out attacks against Israelis” neglected the fact that a collective punishment policy, under many pretexts, had been widely practised for the previous 15 years. Furthermore, the word “allegedly” should have been placed before the phrase “convicted or suspected of carrying out attacks against Israelis” in that paragraph.

20. Nothing supporting the purely political and ambiguous content of paragraph 43 of the report could be found from researching footnote 25 of the report, which merely read “Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Gaza strip: access and movement factsheet 2016”, March 2017”.

21. Lastly, paragraph 45 of the report was also fully aligned with the Israeli point of view in stating that the Israeli “barrier” in the West Bank was “built in 2003 for the stated purpose of preventing Palestinians from carrying out attacks in Israel”.

22. While 70 per cent of the west side of the Dead Sea lay within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel continued to deny the Palestinians the right to use its minerals. The Dead Sea could add nearly 1 billion dollars yearly to Palestinian Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which represented a 10 per cent increase. In addition, it could provide thousands of employment opportunities in the local labour market. His delegation had raised that issue with ESCWA previously and hoped that the next report would address it. Other important issues that the current report had failed to address included overcrowded schools in East Jerusalem and the development of natural gas resources off the coast of Gaza.

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

24. **Mr. Shawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that in the half-century since the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupation authorities had issued hundreds of military orders and discriminatory laws designed to cement their control of natural resources and economic capacities. They exerted direct control by appropriating Palestinian resources in areas they controlled, such as Area C, which included 61 per cent of the West Bank. They exerted indirect control by placing restrictions on the use of the remaining resources that were left to Palestinians. The vast majority of Palestinian imports came from Israel, and the vast majority of Palestinian exports went to Israel, with a massive trade imbalance in favour of the latter. A 2015 report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The 2013 World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation: Israel’s obligations towards Palestinian Trade* (UNCTAD/GDS/APP/2015/2), demonstrated how Israeli control rendered the Palestinian economy ineligible for benefits under that Agreement.

25. Article 11 of General Assembly resolution 71/247 on permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources encouraged all States and international organizations to continue to actively pursue policies to ensure respect for their obligations under international law with regard to all illegal Israeli practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly Israeli settlement activities and the exploitation of natural resources. Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) called upon all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories

occupied since 1967. Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 called on States to blacklist companies operating in the Israeli settlements. In addition to constituting a violation of international law, those settlements were the major mechanism through which Israel plundered Palestinian resources.

26. It was clear that Israel would continue to act as if it were above the law and disregard international resolutions. That made it all the more important for Member States to implement their obligations under those resolutions. A boycott of products from Israeli settlements was consistent with those obligations and with the provisions of international law. It was time for Member States to cut off all dealings and contact with Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land.

27. **Ms. Yáñez Loza** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, took note of the report of ESCWA (A/72/90-E/2017/71) but drew attention to a decline in its quality compared to previous reports. All comments made during the present interactive discussion should be taken into consideration in future reports.

28. Peace and security and sustainable development were interdependent. The Group reaffirmed its position that in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all major outcome documents, the severe difficulties faced by peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation must be taken into account, and the international community must strive to remove the obstacles to the full realization of their right of self-determination, which adversely affected their economic and social development and their ability to achieve and implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. Recalling Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the Group reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Israel must immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Furthermore, all States must distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

30. The Group was concerned about the exploitation by the occupying Power of the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The extensive destruction by Israel of

agricultural land and orchards in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the widespread destruction of vital water, sewage and electricity infrastructure were also matters of grave concern.

31. The Group reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and demanded that Israel cease to exploit, damage, deplete and endanger those resources, and recognize the right of the Palestinian people to claim restitution for the illegal measures taken by Israel.

32. The Group encouraged all States and international organizations to actively pursue policies to ensure respect for international legal obligations with regard to all illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly Israeli settlement activities and the exploitation of natural resources.

33. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, said that the ESCWA report demonstrated the systematic and escalating pattern of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law being committed by Israel. The occupying Power employed discriminatory policies and practices, used excessive force, restricted the movement of persons and goods, and continued to expand its settlements, destroy property and appropriate natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

34. Settlement construction had increased dramatically since the start of 2017, not even including the recent Israeli authorization for thousands of new units, including in the city of Hebron/al-Khalil, where 400 Israeli settlers scattered among 300,000 Palestinian residents enjoyed a separate municipal authority with Israeli-only streets and transportation. In that context, he wished to remind Member States of the call in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967.

35. Israel was even demolishing donor-funded humanitarian assistance structures, in addition to its regular demolitions of privately-owned Palestinian structures, particularly in Area C. The occupying Power continued to exploit natural resources and obstruct movement with its annexationist separation wall, permit regime and hundreds of checkpoints. Israel would continue to behave with impunity if it were not held accountable. The Palestinian people could not remain the exception to the principle of responsibility to protect civilians.

36. The only way to end the suffering of the Palestinian people was for Israel to be compelled to comply with international law and end its half-century-long occupation. Palestine must be enabled to pursue genuine development in line with the 2030 Agenda. He called on Member States and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to assist the Palestinian people in their efforts to obtain their rights, including the right to self-determination and an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

37. **Mr. Aljamali** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, said that although its content fell short of that of previous reports, the current ESCWA report demonstrated how 50 years of occupation had impeded economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods, and most particularly settlement expansion, were preventing Palestinians from making optimal use of their capital and human resources. For example, throughout 2016, the Rafah crossing had remained closed, with the exception of 44 days. Meanwhile, Israel was appropriating natural resources, especially water, and polluting the environment.

38. The siege and succession of wars against Gaza were the primary cause of Palestinian poverty and unemployment there. Settlement expansion and the closure of East Jerusalem were putting more and more people in the West Bank at risk of sliding into poverty, especially in isolated communities in Area C. In February 2017, the Israeli parliament had passed the so-called Regularization Act, which would allow thousands of new units to be built on private Palestinian land. Other methods used by Israel to seize Palestinian land included declaring some areas to be State land and using others for archaeological excavations, the creation of national parks and the development of tourist activities.

39. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to build settlements on the ruins of Syrian villages and fields, while denying Syrian citizens construction permits and access to water sources. Israeli-owned companies continued to explore and exploit natural resources, including gas and oil resources, after receiving licences from the Israeli authorities.

40. He had mentioned only a few examples of the ways that Israel, the occupying Power, was systematically destroying the Palestinian economy, society and environment. The Israeli stranglehold was depriving Palestinians of the most basic rights enshrined by religions and international laws and norms, including the rights to life, property, food, water, development and sovereignty over their natural resources. The

international community must act urgently to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to honour its obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as under the relevant United Nations resolutions, with a view to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and that of Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan, and allowing them to exercise sovereignty over their natural resources.

41. **Mr. Ahmad Tajuddin** (Malaysia) said that the ESCWA report showed how Israeli practices and policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan violated international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and affected the economic and social conditions of the populations under occupation. Israel was continuing to build its separation wall, exploit natural resources, demolish homes, destroy agricultural land and infrastructure, revoke Palestinian residency rights in and around East Jerusalem, conduct military operations throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and severely restrict the movement of persons and goods, including through its blockade of the Gaza Strip. Recent efforts to alter the status quo at holy places were causing tensions to erupt into violence, especially in East Jerusalem. Home demolitions and settler violence particularly affected Palestinian children, both physically and psychologically. A generation of children who grew up knowing only occupation did not bode well either for those children's future or the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

42. He called on the United Nations system to strengthen its assistance programmes for Palestinians and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The international community must ensure that agencies such as UNRWA were provided with adequate financial resources. As a member of the Security Council during the 2015–2016 term, Malaysia had highlighted the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, which had been a focus of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). The United Nations should muster all the tools and political will at its disposal to reverse the trends that were creating a one-State reality instead of a two-State solution.

43. **Ms. Shurbaji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the ESCWA report fell short of fulfilling the Commission's mandate to monitor and investigate the conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and of Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan. The report failed to adequately condemn Israeli practices such as evictions of people from their homes, settlement construction and the appropriation of natural resources.

44. She particularly wished to draw attention to some of the violations occurring in the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel persisted with its open defiance of Security Council resolution 498 (1981) by imposing its racist laws, the most recent being a law scheduling local council elections for 2018. The occupation authorities encouraged settlement construction in the Golan with concessions and tax exemptions, while destroying existing homes and denying building permits to Syrian citizens. Israel withheld medical care from Syrian citizens who rejected Israeli identity, and imposed Israeli curricula in schools. Over one quarter of agricultural land belonging to Syrians had been confiscated, and Israelis were granted priority over Syrians in the allocation of water resources. Israeli and foreign companies, including the United States company Genie Energy, explored for water, gas and oil resources. Israeli policies obstructed the establishment of educational, health and cultural institutions for Syrians, and prevented development of the industrial infrastructure required for development.

45. The Committee did not need to be reminded of the disdain with which Israel had treated hundreds of previous resolutions. Her Government strongly objected to the report's reference to investment by the occupying Power in the development of the Syrian communities in the Golan, as if those communities were not living under an illegitimate regime. The report also failed to mention the Israeli detainment policy, which set prohibitively high bail for persons arrested in the occupied Syrian Golan and, in some cases, transferred them to Israel. Moreover, the occupying Power was not content merely to violate rights and undermine development, but was also providing financial and logistical support for armed terrorist groups in the area of separation in the Golan. The occupying Power should not imagine for one second that its terrorist war would induce her country to back down one inch from its demand for full recovery of the occupied Syrian Golan.

46. **Mr. Roodgar** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Palestinian people would never enjoy the benefits of sustainable development as long as they had no sovereignty over their natural resources. Their rights and dignity had long been trampled by the occupying Power: they had been forced to leave their homes, deprived of their right to pursue social and economic prosperity in their own homeland and denied their inalienable right to self-determination.

47. The Israeli regime continued to promote settler takeovers of land through the construction of housing units, the allocation of agricultural lands for settlements and the development of infrastructure on Palestinian land. Israeli settlement policies violated international

law and all the relevant Security Council resolutions. The occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Syrian Golan, continued to severely affect the economic, social and environmental conditions of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples. The use of force and unlawful killings by Israeli security forces remained serious matters of concern. During the reporting period, 1,122 Palestinians had been displaced as a result of home demolitions. Punitive demolitions of Palestinian family homes amounted to collective punishment.

48. The population of Gaza continued to suffer from the repercussions of the 2014 military conflict. Consequently, 620,000 persons were either still not connected to a water network or received water only once a week or less.

49. Farmers in the West Bank suffered from difficulties in accessing their land. Illegal transfers of hazardous waste by Israeli authorities and settlers and the allocation of parts of the Jordan Valley to an Israeli industrial waste dump had gravely damaged Palestinian agricultural land, health, animals and biodiversity. Food insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory derived primarily from the lack of economic access to food that was intrinsically correlated with poverty.

50. Palestinian and Syrian people would indeed be left behind without sovereignty over their natural resources. Sustainable development of the Palestinian economy and the occupied Syrian Golan would not be possible under current conditions. The collective punishment imposed by Israel constituted a grave breach of international humanitarian law, a crime against humanity and a serious threat to international and regional peace, security and stability. His Government considered the Golan an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and condemned all measures taken by the illegitimate occupying Power to undermine the territorial integrity of Syria.

51. Any solution to the crisis in Palestine, including ways and means to achieve sustainable development and economic growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, required an immediate termination of the occupation and the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the establishment of their independent and viable State, and full sovereignty over their natural resources.

52. **Mr. Khashaan** (Saudi Arabia) said that the Israeli authorities were committing flagrant violations of international instruments and norms, including continued settlement construction, excessive use of force, and unprecedented restrictions on access to the Aqsa Mosque compound, which his country was

working with other States to have lifted. One of his country's highest priorities was the resolution of the conflict through a peace treaty that would provide security and normalized relations among all States of the region following Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territory occupied since 1967. It was more urgent than ever to move forward on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, which had been proposed by his country over a decade and a half previously, and had been met with general approval from Arab and Islamic States, and the international community as a whole. Any settlement of the conflict should also be based on international resolutions that called for a fully sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

53. **Ms. Moni** (Bangladesh) said that the continuing occupation of Palestinian territories, systematic human rights violations, indiscriminate attacks against civilians and the expansion of illegal settlements by Israel, the occupying Power, constituted an affront to the rights of the Palestinian people. Gaza continued to face chronic electricity and fuel deficits and severe water shortages, which were exacerbated by the ongoing demolition of water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure by Israel, thereby increasing the risk of water-borne diseases. Israeli authorities and settlers continued to illegally transfer hazardous waste to the West Bank and other areas, causing grave damage to Palestinian agricultural land, health, animals and biodiversity. Her delegation condemned the discriminatory planning policies implemented by Israel in Palestinian territory, which consistently failed to address public needs and seriously hampered investment in infrastructure.

54. The occupation was contributing to a host of social ills: high unemployment; rampant poverty; widespread displacement and homelessness; health problems; severe food insecurity; a lack of schools and high dropout rates; and rising dependency on aid for the most basic of needs. In 2016, grave education-related violations had continued to restrict the right of children to safely access education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The destruction of homes and properties and the exploitation, endangerment and depletion of Palestinian natural resources had compounded poverty and underdevelopment. Those development issues and others must be addressed.

55. The principle that no one should be left behind applied to all, including peoples under foreign occupation. Her delegation called on the international community to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to end its systematic violation of international humanitarian law and human rights so that the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory could grow. The

Government and people of Bangladesh remained steadfast in their support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of a two-State solution. Bangladesh reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, and recognized their right to claim restitution for the illegal measures taken by Israel. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved in the absence of the right to self-determination of the people living in those territories.

56. **Mr. Lumban Tobing** (Indonesia) said that it was simply inconceivable for Palestinians to undertake transformative steps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals under Israeli occupation, which had severely limited social and economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The cumulative effect of the persistent destruction of property and infrastructure, the confiscation of land, the expansion of illegal settlements and prolonged restrictions on movement and trade was to reverse development in Palestine.

57. Special attention must be given to the needs of countries and peoples under foreign occupation, and the obstacles to the full realization of their right to self-determination must be removed. Sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their wealth, natural resources and economic activity would provide them with the basic rights and resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

58. First, measures must be undertaken to effectively end the exploitation and depletion of Palestinian natural resources by Israeli authorities and settlers. Palestinians continued to suffer from restrictions to basic and essential services, supplies and infrastructure, including public health, education, food and fuel, water, sanitation and electricity. Natural resources should be directed towards ensuring that basic needs were met.

59. Second, restrictions on the movement of persons and goods must be lifted to allow the economy of Palestine to realize its full potential. The UNCTAD *Trade and Development Report 2017* had highlighted the lacklustre performance of the Palestinian economy in 2016 and its high unemployment, which had reached levels rarely seen since the Great Depression. Lifting movement restrictions would generate greater economic opportunities for the Palestinian people that would reduce poverty and lessen reliance on foreign aid.

60. Third, the international community must redouble its efforts to bring an end to the Israeli occupation. The problem of economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was essentially political, not technical; for that reason, a political solution was a prerequisite for the sustainable development of the Palestinian people.

61. His Government would continue to support Palestinian development at the bilateral and regional levels. Under the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership, it had launched 157 capacity-building programmes for Palestinians, covering such areas as good governance and public administration, small and medium-sized businesses, infrastructure, energy, mineral resources and poverty reduction. Indonesia also contributed to the provision of basic services for the Palestinian people through the construction, inter alia, of the Indonesian Cardiac Centre in Gaza in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank. Indonesia reaffirmed its unwavering support for the full realization of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine, including the right to self-determination and an independent and sovereign State.

62. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia) said that loss and reduction of land, water and other natural resources were some of the main factors that prevented the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory from thriving. That was compounded by the separation of the Palestinian market from international markets, the blockade on Gaza, the expansion of settlements and the construction of the separation wall on Palestinian land.

63. Her delegation was deeply concerned by the reported ongoing use of discriminatory policies and practices that included the use of force; restrictions on freedom of movement, including closures in Gaza; settlement expansion; the destruction of property; and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

64. The report highlighted that damage to electricity gridlines and fuel and electricity shortages were contributing to a chronic electricity and fuel deficit in Gaza that further exacerbated the water crisis. Difficulties in obtaining Israeli permits for constructing or rehabilitating Palestinian water infrastructure in the West Bank also contributed to denying Palestinians their right to access water. Farmers in the West Bank struggled to access land, and Israeli restrictions prevented Palestinians from benefiting from most of the land located in Area C. In East Jerusalem, decades of insufficient investment in infrastructure and a lack of building permits had resulted in approximately 36 per

cent of the population having illegal connections to water networks and up to one third of the population lacked sewage connections. Restrictions imposed by Israel on fishing areas off Gaza had been detrimental to its fishing industry.

65. The Israeli Government must desist immediately from settlement and wall construction, cease its destruction of Palestinian homes and properties and illegal exploitation of natural resources, and comply with its legal obligations under the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

66. Her delegation stressed the need to preserve the territorial contiguity, unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods; and demand compliance with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, representing the Palestinian people. The signing of a reconciliation agreement in October 2017 between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, placing Gaza and the West Bank under one government for the first time since 2007, had been encouraging.

67. It was only through legally established statehood, achieved through political, diplomatic, peaceful and non-violent means, that social normalcy, legal equality, economic opportunity and sustainable development could be realized. Namibia called for an international consensus that reinforced the position that Palestine should reach its full economic potential, free from barriers to normal economic activities and less heavily reliant on international assistance. The illegal Israeli occupation must end. Statehood and independence were the national, inalienable and legal right of the Palestinian people.

68. **Ms. Al-Shammari** (Qatar) said that, like previous reports, the current report demonstrated the suffering of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan caused by discriminatory Israeli policies and practices, excessive use of force, restrictions on freedom of movement, settlement expansion and the appropriation of natural resources. She expressed particular concern over the Israeli assault on educational institutions, which was denying children safe access to education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

69. The 2030 Agenda recognized that sustainable development could not be realized without peace and security and the removal of the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples

living under colonial and foreign occupation. Israeli appropriation of natural resources, restrictions on movement and settlement construction were not only violations of international law, but also severe impediments to economic and social development in both Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan.

70. There could no longer be any doubt about the need to end the bitter struggle that was wearing down the capacities of the peoples of the Middle East. Regional prosperity depended on maximizing opportunities for peace, so that economic and human resources could be channelled towards development. The Palestinian people should be enabled to enjoy all their rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory, as should the Arab inhabitants in the occupied Syrian Golan.

71. **Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the actions of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan were a contravention of international law and an attempt to alter the legal political status of those territories, which constituted a clear breach of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Israel was flouting Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on ending the occupation and construction of settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory. The human rights of Palestinians continued to be violated through the implementation of repressive measures, including the destruction and confiscation of property and infrastructure; arbitrary detentions, including of more than 700 children; the removal of Palestinian citizens from their land; and restrictions on freedom of movement.

72. His delegation was concerned that the demolition of buildings owned by Palestinians on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem had continued in 2017 at the same pace as in 2016, a record year for those practices. Israel continued to build its separation wall, which had been rejected by the International Court of Justice as contrary to international law. Those illegal actions sought to fragment the political and territorial unity of the State of Palestine and were detrimental to its independence and sovereignty.

73. The prolonged occupation by Israel and the illegal exploitation and degradation of Palestinian natural resources were resulting in other negative consequences, including the contamination of aquifer reserves and arable land, the loss of flora and fauna, and hurdles that prevented Palestine from developing its natural gas reserves off the coast of Gaza. As long as the illegal Israeli occupation persisted, Palestine would be unable to achieve either the Millennium Development Goals or the Sustainable Development Goals. The cost

of the 50-year occupation had been monstrous, endangering the very existence of the State of Palestine through the systematic destruction of its economic viability. His delegation was particularly concerned about the residents of Gaza, who had been subject to a brutal blockade for more than a decade and had endured at least three bloody attacks by Israel. The estimated annual cost of the occupation exceeded \$9 billion, reflected in infrastructure, human capital, the industrial and service sectors, and in restrictions on the use of natural resources and lost tax revenue that went to Israel. Furthermore, the occupation was a source of frustration and desperation for Palestinians, particularly young people.

74. The sovereign management of natural resources was an effective and legitimate means of development. Their illegal exploitation by third parties usurped the rights of countries to make use of such resources and was contrary to the shared goal of achieving sustainable development for the eradication of poverty.

75. **Mr. Al Khafaji** (Iraq) said that even as his country was fighting its war on behalf of the entire world against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist gangs, it still held the Palestinian cause among its highest priorities. Israeli practices, and especially settlement expansion in and around Jerusalem, were a blatant violation of United Nations resolutions, international law and human rights. The occupation employed excessive use of force and imposed discriminatory policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

76. Resolving the Palestinian question was crucial, because all of the region's other problems were connected with it. The right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty over their resources was firmly enshrined in international law and norms, and Palestinians had a right to compensation for any of those resources that were diverted or depleted by Israel. Israeli practices were leaving Palestinians behind in the drive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. He called on Member States to support the Palestinian people politically, economically and in any other way they could, as that people tried to regain sovereignty over their land in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and in particular paragraphs 1 and 5 of Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), with a view to the establishment of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

77. **Ms. Aljazi** (Jordan) said that, after 50 years, the occupation remained the primary obstacle in the way of Palestinian development. Israeli settlement expansion,

the withdrawal of Palestinian residency rights in East Jerusalem, land confiscation, the appropriation of natural resources, closure policies, restrictions on the movement of people and goods and the ongoing siege of Gaza all had a negative impact on development indicators. The Palestinian economy faced financial shortfalls, sluggish growth, high unemployment and poverty, food insecurity, a shrinking agricultural sector and rising inflation.

78. Studies such as the ESCWA report and the UNCTAD report on the effect of Israeli control on Palestine's eligibility for benefits under the 2013 World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Facilitation showed clearly how Israel, the occupying Power, imposed restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement and access to fields, and confiscated thousands of dunums of land for the benefit of the settlements. Israel also destroyed houses, levelled fields, uprooted and burned trees, implemented discriminatory water policies and built bypass roads that criss-crossed agricultural land. The so-called "Regularization Law" recently adopted by the Israeli parliament had opened the way for even more private Palestinian land to be used for Israeli housing units. According to the UNCTAD report, about half of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip suffered from food insecurity, and only 10 per cent had access to safe drinking water. The electricity crisis had reached unprecedented levels.

79. To put it simply, there could be no development under occupation. Her delegation called for pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinian people to enjoy the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for continued international support to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

80. **Mr. Annakou** (Libya) said that the ESCWA report documented the ways that the Israeli occupation undermined Palestinian self-determination. Continued construction of the separation wall despite the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice ruling that wall illegal was cutting off Palestinian farmers from their fields. Israel continued to evict families and destroy their homes at an alarming rate. Palestinians were denied access to water and freedom of movement. Food insecurity persisted, notably as a result of the closure of border crossings and other restrictions in Gaza, where the decade-old siege had turned one of the world's most densely populated areas into a giant prison. The Committee, which focused largely on sustainable development, should ask itself how the aspiration of leaving no one behind could be achieved for the Palestinian people. Goals such as poverty

eradication, food security and a peaceful and inclusive society were out of reach for a people under occupation.

81. The report also showed how, in the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupation was expanding settlements, blocking access to water resources and confiscating ever more agricultural land. The practices of the Israeli occupation were in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other instruments of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Libya would stand with the Palestinian people in the quest for their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State in all of its territory with Jerusalem as its capital, and also the right of return for refugees.

82. **Mr. Ahmad** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the findings of the ESCWA report indicated that Palestinians could fail to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as a result of the occupation, which continued to hamper development efforts. For over 50 years the natural resources of the Palestinians had been exploited in an unfair and discriminatory manner. The illegal blockade in Gaza reduced the availability of basic services, preventing the Palestinian economy from achieving its full potential and increasing poverty and aid dependency. The United Nations played a key role in galvanizing international efforts to bring about a just and enduring solution to the illegal occupation. His delegation reiterated its support for the related General Assembly resolutions, which encouraged all States and international organizations to actively pursue policies to ensure respect for obligations under international law with regard to illegal practices and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, especially illegal settlements and the exploitation of natural resources.

83. He welcomed the work done by United Nations agencies, including UNRWA, in alleviating the plight of those in need. Efforts must now turn to translating the growing international recognition of the State of Palestine into positive changes on the ground to enable Palestinians to pursue sustainable development in their homeland. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, and for the achievement of self-determination in an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

84. **Mr. Schlosser** (Israel) said that just days previously, the Hamas leader in Gaza had told a group of young Palestinians that the question was not one of "recognition", but rather "elimination" of Israel. That

was evidently Hamas' message to the international community in the wake of the recent reconciliation agreement signed between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Of course, that kind of information would never appear in the annual ESCWA report, because the resolution mandating that report requested information only on "Israeli practices and policies", and not on the practices and policies of the Palestinians. The report used false narratives and partial information to give a one-sided view of reality that served only to inflame tensions and bash Israel. One would not know from the report that Hamas was an internationally listed terrorist organization that administered the Gaza Strip through violence, repression and denial of human rights, and misused economic and financial resources. It was Hamas that had initiated the hostilities of the summer of 2014 by firing hundreds of rockets at Israeli cities, precipitating a conflict that caused hardship on both sides. The report also did not adequately cover the daily threat of terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens by Palestinians incited by religious leaders, politicians and the Palestinian media.

85. His country saw Palestinian economic growth and effective governance as the only way to move forward towards a resolution of the conflict. The report neglected to include a number of positive developments. There had recently been an agreement on a Red Sea-Dead Sea pipeline project that would increase Palestinians' water supply. Implementation of the 2016 agreement on electricity had commenced, and a framework had been signed to reconvene the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee. There had also been agreements on cross-border sewage flow. More Palestinian workers were employed in Israel than at any time since 1985. Israel was also committed to the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, which did not receive a mention in the current report, but had allowed for the import of millions of tons of construction materials that had improved the housing situation in Gaza significantly. With respect to electricity shortages, he reminded the Committee that it had been the Palestinian Authority that had requested Israel to cut the electricity supply to Gaza by one third.

86. It was surreal, year after year, to hear allegations of human rights violations by some of the world's worst human rights abusers. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic was merely trying to divert attention from her country's crimes against its own people; the population of the Golan was alive and well, something that could not be said of the hundreds of thousands of Syrian citizens killed in Syria over the previous few years. Meanwhile, Iran was the world's chief banker, trainer and sponsor of terrorism.

87. **Mr. Gad** (Egypt) said that, for decades, the Secretary-General's reports under the current agenda item had chronicled the bitter circumstances of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. The conditions described in the current report stood in stark contrast to the aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals.

88. Israeli policies violated international humanitarian law and human rights law, and included discrimination and forced transfer of persons protected under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The occupation's settlement policy entailed home demolitions, restrictions on construction, and the confiscation of up to 20 per cent of the West Bank, not to mention the climate of hatred created by settler violence. The resulting decline in foreign financing had led to numerous financial crises for the Palestinian Authority and made any kind of sustainable economic growth impossible. Half of the Palestinian population required humanitarian assistance. The Palestinian economy was severely lacking in an industrial base and competitiveness. As the report stated in its conclusion, adherence to international law was imperative to securing justice and peace for all the peoples in the region.

89. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that the illegal 50-year Israeli occupation of Palestine had been devastating to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and infringed their right to self-determination. Furthermore, the ongoing settlement activities by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory seriously undermined the two-State solution and threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. They were a blight on the conscience of the international community that must end.

90. Unemployment in Palestine was among the highest in the world; poverty was increasing at an alarming rate; and GDP had dropped by 71 per cent since 1990 as a result of the blockade. Basic services such as water, sanitation, education and health care were needed to enhance development and enable the population to lift itself out of poverty. Similarly, Palestinians must be allowed free movement to access opportunities for socioeconomic development and self-determination. A robust Palestinian economy was essential for a viable Palestinian State in the context of a two-State solution.

91. The control exerted by Israel over the natural resources and productive infrastructure of Palestine was reversing gains in development, industry and

agriculture. The elimination of marketing opportunities, the shrinking availability of land and natural resources and the destruction of infrastructure continued to devastate the Palestinian economy, dashing the hopes of the Palestinian people for recovery and meaningful improvement in their lives. Member States must continue to provide political and economic support to the just cause of the people of Palestine.

92. **Ms. Al Awadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that Israeli occupation had brought about a decline in economic, social and humanitarian conditions. Israeli settlement expansion, which continued despite numerous United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), was a shameful violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, a threat to a two-State solution, and an obstacle to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The separation wall, land confiscation and depletion of water resources were responsible for high unemployment rates, food and water insecurity, and a decline in health and education services.

93. The international community's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals required it to remove the obstacles that were leaving Palestinians behind. She urged the international community, the relevant financial institutions and other donors to support UNRWA, and commended the Secretary-General's efforts in that regard. Her country had recently made a voluntary contribution of \$15 million to the Agency. Palestinians should be enabled to establish an independent State within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid terms of reference.

94. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that freedom, peace, independence and national sovereignty were founding values of the United Nations, without which development could not be achieved. Those values were however being profoundly violated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, through restrictive laws and discriminatory planning and zoning policies enacted by the occupying Power, which had deprived Palestinians of sovereignty over their natural resources and their right to development for many years.

95. Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan could not be improved without adherence to the principles of the inadmissibility of acquiring land by force and non-discrimination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. His delegation reiterated its steadfast

support for the rights of the Palestinians, including the need for a two-State solution as a fundamental step towards safeguarding the human rights of the Palestinian people and their right of self-determination.

96. The Maldives condemned the use of force; ill-treatment of detainees, including minors; and unlawful killings by Israeli forces in an environment of impunity. His delegation remained concerned that punitive demolition of Palestinian homes had intensified. The so-called "Regularization Law" passed by the Israeli Parliament in February 2017 and the declaration of vast amounts of land in the West Bank as "State land" were forcing further displacement of Palestinian people.

97. The Maldives called on Israel to strictly abide by Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council had demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Compliance with that resolution would benefit Israel as much as Palestine, returning the land and resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and occupied Syrian Golan to their rightful owners and ensuring respect for the rule of law.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

98. **Ms. Shurbaji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that desperate efforts by the representative of the occupation to divert attention from its violations were disrespectful to the United Nations. Attempts to distort the facts could not erase them. The terrorist war being waged against her country was intended to destroy the Syrian Arab Republic as a political force and to undermine peace efforts. The enemy's lies would not deter her country from defending the rights of its people. The Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan who, according to the representative of the occupation, were supposedly living in prosperity were in fact being deprived of their most basic rights. Their livelihoods, homes and resources were being taken from them. They were denied medical care as a punishment for maintaining their Syrian identity. They were forced to use Israeli curricula in school and were subject to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

99. A single meeting of the Committee was not long enough to give a full picture of the brutality of the occupation. Israeli crimes went beyond appropriating resources and obstructing development to include intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign State by providing assistance to terrorists operating on Syrian territory. It was no surprise that Israel should share the goals of those terrorists, and unfortunate that the support

of certain States allowed Israel to violate international law with impunity.

100. **Mr. Roodgar** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as usual, Israel was seeking to divert attention from its policies and practices by attacking others. The accusations made by the representative of Israel were particularly ironic from a regime so well known for its apartheid policies and war crimes. The Islamic Republic of Iran was contributing to peace in the Middle East even as it fought terrorist groups. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land was responsible for the better part of tension and conflict in the region. The region would not know peace as long as that occupation persisted.

101. **Mr. Schlosser** (Israel) said that as long as the leaders of Iran continued to express their wish to eliminate Israel, a Member State of the United Nations, Iran could not be considered a respectable member of the international community. He also wondered if the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic could explain how dropping barrel bombs on schools, markets and hospitals contributed to development.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.