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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE*

* The present document is a mimeographed version of the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which will be issued in final form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/51/35).

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

15 November 1996

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 50/84 A of 15 December 1995.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Ibra Deguène KA
Chairman of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

His Excellency
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General of the United Nations

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, in which the Assembly requested the Committee to consider and recommend to it a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. During the reporting period the Committee continued to be composed of 23 Member States, as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.[1]

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly[2] were endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 31/20 of 24 November 1976 as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports[3] the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination.

3. The Committee has welcomed the signing in September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (A/48/486-S/26560, annex), and subsequent implementation agreements, in particular the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, signed in Washington, D.C., which provided for phased withdrawal of Israeli forces and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, as important steps towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Committee strongly believes that the settlement of the question of Palestine can only be achieved through the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination. Each year, the General Assembly has endorsed the Committee's recommendations with overwhelming support and has renewed its mandate and expanded it, as necessary.

4. During the year under review, the Committee welcomed, as important further steps in this process, the redeployment of Israeli forces from areas of the West Bank, the successful holding on 20 January 1996 of the first Palestinian elections to the Legislative Council and the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, as well as the beginning on 5 May of the negotiations on the permanent status of the Palestinian territory. Notwithstanding these positive developments, the Committee was greatly concerned at the recrudescence of tensions in the region, as a result of acts of violence inside Israel aimed at jeopardizing the peace process, as well as the massive bombardment of Lebanon by Israeli forces, and the prolonged closure of the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, which had devastating consequences for the Palestinian economy.

5. The Committee expressed apprehension that the policy guidelines adopted by the new Government of Israel and statements made by the Prime Minister appeared

to reflect a departure from the basic terms of reference of the peace process. In that regard, the Committee was alarmed by the resumption of the settlement activities, land confiscations and closures of the Palestinian territory, as well as the position taken by the new Government on the issue of Jerusalem. The Committee emphasized that the transitional period had reached a crucial stage, which required the full and effective implementation of the agreements reached and a speedy resumption of substantive negotiations on the basis of agreed principles, as well as confidence-building measures.

6. The Committee expressed its great concern at the violations by the Government of Israel of the agreements already reached, including the delay in the redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron, its decision to open a new entrance to the archaeological tunnel along the Western Wall of Haram al-Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem, which resulted in violent confrontations and deaths and injuries of many Palestinian civilians, as well as casualties among Palestinian police and Israeli military. The Committee believed that, if not promptly contained, these developments could lead to a greater tension on the ground that would seriously endanger the peace process. In this connection, it welcomed the efforts aimed at resolving the situation and resuming the negotiations between the parties. The Committee also believes that the Israeli-Palestinian agreements should be implemented in full and on time, beginning with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Hebron and the lifting of closures of the Palestinian territory.

7. The Committee affirmed once again the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. It emphasized the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the Palestinian self-government institutions, as well as in providing varied assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields.

8. Expressing concern at the continued deterioration of the Palestinian economy and the problems of poverty, unemployment and lack of adequate infrastructure faced by the Palestinian Authority, the Committee urged Member States to expedite the provision of economic, technical and development assistance to the Palestinian people in order to help build solid foundations for peace.

9. The Committee firmly believes that, as the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, it can make a valuable and positive contribution to United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by continuing to promote dialogue and to educate and mobilize international opinion and action for the successful outcome of the agreements reached by the parties and in solidarity with the Palestinian people until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is achieved, in accordance with international legitimacy. The Committee has continued to adjust its work programme in order to enhance its contribution, in view of these priorities and keeping in mind the evolving realities on the ground.

II. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

10. The mandate of the Committee for the year 1996 is contained in paragraphs 2 to 6 of General Assembly resolution 50/84 A of 15 December 1995, in which the Assembly:

(a) Considered that the Committee could continue to make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period; endorsed the recommendations of the Committee; and requested it to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate;

(b) Authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-first session and thereafter;

(c) Also requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and promoting support and assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, and to take the necessary steps to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work.

11. In its resolution 50/84 B, also of 15 December 1995, the General Assembly considered that the Division for Palestinian Rights continued to make a useful and constructive contribution through the organization of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, as well as through its research and monitoring activities, and the collection and dissemination of information in printed and electronic form on all issues pertaining to the question of Palestine. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources, including for the further development of the United Nations information system on the question of Palestine, and to ensure that it continued to discharge the tasks detailed in the pertinent resolutions of the Assembly, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance.

12. In its resolution 50/84 C of 15 December 1995, the General Assembly requested the Department of Public Information, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as might be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1996-1997, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

13. In carrying out its programme of work, the Committee also took into account General Assembly resolution 50/84 D, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects; expressed its full support for the ongoing peace process, which began at Madrid, and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, as well as

subsequent implementation agreements, and expressed the hope that the process would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East; called for the timely and scrupulous implementation of the agreements reached between the parties towards the negotiation of the final settlement, which began on 5 May 1996; urged Member States to expedite the provision of economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people during that critical period; and emphasized the importance for the United Nations to play a more active and expanded role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. Election of officers

14. At its 221st meeting, on 7 May 1996, the Committee elected Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal) as Chairman, replacing Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), former Chairman of the Committee who had been assigned by his Government to another post, re-elected Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) as Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) as Rapporteur.

15. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 1996[4] in implementation of its mandate.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

16. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members and Permanent Observers to the United Nations desiring to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. Accordingly, in a letter dated 20 May 1996, the Chairman of the Committee informed the Secretary-General, who subsequently transmitted the letter, on 22 May 1996, to the States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, and to intergovernmental organizations. In accordance with established practice, the Committee also invited Palestine, represented by the PLO, to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer, to attend all its meetings and to make observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee.

17. On 20 August 1996, the Government of South Africa, in a note verbale addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, informed him of its decision to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer. The Committee welcomed the decision of the Government of South Africa and approved the request at its 225th meeting, on 15 November 1996.

18. In 1996, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year.[5]

C. Re-establishment of the Working Group

19. At its 221st meeting, on 7 May 1996, the Committee re-established its Working Group in order to assist in the preparation and expedition of the work of the Committee, on the understanding that any Committee member or observer could participate in its deliberations.[6] The Working Group was constituted as before under the chairmanship of Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), with Mr. Syed Akbaruddin (India) as Vice-Chairman.

IV. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION RELATING TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

20. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee continued to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to exert all efforts to promote the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights. The Committee also continued to contribute to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995, as well as to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people.

21. The Committee continued to monitor the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the developments in the peace process on an ongoing basis through the media, the reports of United Nations organs and agencies, as well as information provided by non-governmental organizations, individual experts and others who participated in meetings held under the auspices of the Committee.

22. The Committee welcomed the fact that, in accordance with the agreements, Israel had redeployed its military forces from six major West Bank towns and over 450 villages, and that powers and responsibilities in the administrative and civilian field, as well as in the area of security, had been transferred to the Palestinian Authority. The Committee noted with satisfaction the continued strengthening of the institutional capacity of the Authority. It also welcomed the successful holding of the first Palestinian elections, on 20 January, to the 87-member legislative Council and to the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, and congratulated President Yasser Arafat on that historic event. The Council was subsequently inaugurated on 7 March 1996. On 9 May, President Arafat announced the appointment of a 21-member Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council. The Committee was also pleased to note that, for the first time, the Palestine National Council had been able to hold its meeting in Gaza, from 22 to 25 April, and had decided to abrogate articles of the Palestine National Charter that were contrary to the agreements reached between Israel and the PLO. The Committee also noted the start, in early May, of the permanent status negotiations between Israel and the PLO, in accordance with the timetable contained in the Declaration of Principles of September 1993. The negotiations were adjourned after a number of procedural decisions had been taken.

23. The Committee also noted with grave concern the exacerbation of the situation on the ground as a result of Israeli security measures in the wake of suicide attacks against Israeli civilians in February and March. The prolonged and at times complete closure of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem in particular further stifled the Palestinian economy and caused immense suffering and hardship to the Palestinian people.

24. Of particular concern were the guidelines adopted by the new Government of Israel and statements made by the Prime Minister concerning the basis of the peace process, including the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, as well as issues related to the final settlement, in particular Jerusalem, settlements, the return of refugees and Palestinian sovereignty, which appeared to depart from the agreed principles and to link implementation to extraneous issues. The redeployment of Israeli troops from Hebron, which was to have taken place in March but was delayed until after the Israeli elections, was further postponed, encouraging provocations by settlers and greatly aggravating tension in the

town. The continued lack of safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip infringed on the status and integrity of the Palestinian territory as a single territorial unit, stipulated in the agreements, hampered the Palestinian Authority in the exercise of its responsibilities and further exacerbated the serious economic situation. The Committee was also concerned at the interference by Israel with activities of the Palestinian Council members representing the Jerusalem district. The Committee also noted with concern that further redeployments of Israeli troops, which were due to take place beginning six months after the inauguration of the Council, had not begun on 7 September in accordance with the agreed timetable.

25. The Committee also noted that although a number of prisoners had been released, some 3,100 Palestinians still remained in Israeli prisons, and that their relatives, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), had experienced serious difficulties in visiting them owing to the prolonged closure of the occupied territory. The Committee recalled that the agreements provided for the phased release of Palestinian prisoners as an important confidence-building measure, to establish a solid basis of mutual trust and good faith between the two sides, and called upon Israel to release the prisoners in accordance with the agreements. The Committee further reaffirmed that the holding of prisoners in the territory of the occupying Power was a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and called upon Israel to respect its obligations under the Convention.

26. The imposition on 25 February of the closure of areas under Palestinian jurisdiction in effect fragmented the territory into many small enclaves isolated from each other and from the outside world. It was reported that the closure, the strictest ever since the beginning of occupation in 1967, continued as of September 1996, without any prospect of its being lifted in the near future, and that the measures periodically announced by Israel to ease the closure were insufficient to restore the situation. The Gaza Strip, in particular, experienced severe restrictions and even a prolonged total ban on the traffic of persons and goods, and limitations on access to the sea for fishing. While the situation in Gaza was reportedly more severe, the local economy in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was seriously disrupted as agricultural production could not be exported and raw materials needed for industries and public works projects could not be imported. Some 70,000 workers dependent on employment in Israel for their livelihood were being prevented from travelling to work. Education was also affected, as teachers and students could not move between areas and many schools and universities had been shut down. It was also reported that 1,200 Gazan students who attended educational institutions in the West Bank had been ordered home in March and had not been able to return. The closure also caused a deterioration in the health situation, particularly in Gaza, as provision of foodstuffs and medical supplies was restricted and many persons in need of urgent medical treatment unavailable locally were being denied permits to travel to Israel or the West Bank. The Committee further noted with the greatest concern that staff of international non-governmental organizations and of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had experienced restrictions in their freedom of movement and that their humanitarian work had been disrupted at a time of great crisis.

27. The Committee praised the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, and the United Nations system as a whole, for their rapid response to the emergency situation and the efforts to promote an easing of the closure and the creation of local employment, as well as for the continuing programme of assistance for the development of the Palestinian

territory despite the many difficulties on the ground. However, the Committee was gravely concerned to note, in the Secretary-General's report, projections that the closure would cost the Palestinian economy some $800 million by the end of 1996 and result in average unemployment of over 30 per cent (over 50 per cent in Gaza). The Committee expressed the view that the drastic closure amounted to collective punishment of the 2.5 million Palestinians living in the occupied territory, in contravention of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and could not in any way be justified by Israel's security needs, as it aggravated the economic hardships and insecurity of Palestinians, jeopardized assistance projects by the international community and thus undermined the achievements of the peace process, increasing tension and instability in the area. The Committee called on the international community, and in particular the donor countries, to continue to spare no effort in the pursuit of economic and social development and the improvement of the living conditions of Palestinians as the indispensable underpinning for peace.

28. The Committee was gravely concerned at the negative implications of the prolonged closure for the future of Jerusalem, which is to be negotiated as part of the final settlement as agreed in the Declaration of Principles of September 1993. The Committee noted that the closure had practically cut off Palestinian access to East Jerusalem, thus depriving Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank of their most important religious, cultural and social centre, isolating Palestinian Jerusalemites from their natural hinterland and stifling the economy of East Jerusalem. The Committee also noted with great concern that the Israeli Government had intensified its efforts against Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem, in disregard of the letter from Prime Minister Shimon Peres to the late Foreign Minister of Norway Johan Jørgen Holst of 11 October 1993. A number of measures were also being taken aimed at withdrawing residency status from Palestinians living in Jerusalem. The Committee expressed alarm at the demolition, in August, in the Old City of a building belonging to the Burj al-Laqlaq Society, which provides services to Palestinian children, including the physically handicapped. The Committee considered that these measures were in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. They were also a violation of various resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations, which prohibit any attempts to alter the character, demographic composition and status of Jerusalem.

29. The Committee welcomed the relocation of the headquarters of UNRWA from Vienna to Gaza City. The Committee took note of the signing, on 5 July 1996, of the headquarters agreement between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, it expressed concern at the financial constraints of the Agency and hoped that outstanding pledges and voluntary funds would be forthcoming so that the Agency could continue to provide its vital services to the Palestinian refugees.

30. The Committee further expressed grave concern at policy statements and decisions by the Israeli Government portending the renewed expansion of land confiscation and settlement construction in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. The Committee noted reports that, at the end of July, Israel's National Infrastructures Minister had announced the resumption of plans to build two highways through the West Bank to connect Jewish settlements with Israel. It was also reported that, on 2 August, the Israeli Cabinet had decided to lift the restrictions on construction of settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip imposed by the previous Government in 1993 and to streamline approval procedures by placing them

directly under the responsibility of the Defence Minister. Subsequently, it was reported that the Government had pledged $5 million in aid to settlers and, on 19 September, the Israeli authorities approved plans to build some 4,000 housing units in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The Committee noted reports that, despite restrictions under the previous Government, the number of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza had already increased by 45 per cent (from 100,000 to 145,000, excluding settlers in the area of East Jerusalem) in the past four years and it considered that the policy and practice of settlement was one of the gravest threats facing the Palestinian people and the peace process itself. The Committee noted that those measures were contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention and to the provisions in the agreements, which stipulate that the integrity and status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would be preserved during the transitional period, pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. Noting the great international concern over this issue, the Committee called on all Governments, the United Nations system and the international community as a whole, including non-governmental organizations, to intensify their efforts against the settlements policy and for the protection of Jerusalem.

31. In a press release issued on 10 September 1996,[7] the Bureau of the Committee expressed its satisfaction at the resumption, on 4 September, at Beit Hanoun, Gaza Strip, of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The Bureau welcomed the meeting between the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, as an important step towards the full implementation of the agreements already reached between the two sides. The Bureau expressed the hope that the meeting would clear the way for the continuation of substantive discussions on matters pertaining to the permanent status.

32. The Committee expressed its concern at the continued lack of respect by the Israeli side for the provisions of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements reached so far. Of special concern to the Committee in the recent months remained the issue of delays in the redeployment of Israeli forces from the town of Hebron in violation of the agreements.

33. Further, on 23 September 1996, the Committee noted with alarm that the Israeli authorities, in violation of Israel’s obligations under international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, had opened an entrance to a tunnel in the vicinity of Haram al-Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem, as a result endangering the security and integrity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the foundations of the Islamic structures existing above the tunnel. In that connection, the Committee expressed grave concern at the escalation of violence resulting in deaths and injuries of over 50 Palestinian civilians and casualties among Palestinian police and Israeli military.

34. The Committee welcomed the efforts undertaken to resolve the situation and resume the peace process. It also took note of the Middle East Summit, held at the invitation of the President of the United States of America, which included the participation of King Hussein of Jordan, the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority in Washington, D.C., on 1 and 2 October 1996 and the parties’ determination to renew and intensify negotiations on how to carry out the provisions of the peace agreements already reached between them. In that regard, the Committee reiterated its strong support for the peace process and its determination to spare no effort in promoting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and statehood.

V. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/84 A

1. Reaction to developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

(a) Communication to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

35. In a letter dated 26 September 1996 (A/51/418-S/1996/795), the Chairman of the Committee expressed the greatest anxiety at the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory following Israel's decision to open a new entrance to the archaeological tunnel in East Jerusalem that runs under Palestinian property along the Western Wall of the Haram al-Sharif, the third largest site of Islam.

36. The Chairman stated that these tragic developments follow repeated warnings about the devastating consequences for Palestinian hopes and living conditions of the delayed implementation by Israel of the agreements already reached, its prolonged closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, the resumption of land confiscation and settlement, and actions against Palestinian property and institutions in Jerusalem. The Committee believed that current events demonstrated the fragility of the peace process and called on Israel urgently to reverse its measures, to promote reconciliation with the Palestinian people and to resume substantive negotiations towards a just final settlement in accordance with international legitimacy.

(b) Action taken within the Security Council

37. At the request of the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of April 1996, dated 10 April 1996,[8] an urgent meeting of the Security Council was held on 15 April 1996, to consider the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

38. The Acting Chairman of the Committee participated in the debate on this issue on 15 April 1996. In his statement on behalf of the Committee,[9] he stated that the decision by the Israeli Government regarding the blockade and closure of Israeli borders with the Palestinian territory had led to economic hardships and aggravation of tensions in the area and was of great concern to the Committee. The action had made life for the people of the Palestinian territory extremely difficult and that situation might increase difficulties in relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

39. The Israeli policy, he added, had resulted in rapidly escalating hardships for the entire Palestinian population. Uncertain food supplies and massive unemployment had reached crisis levels. Patients and medical staff alike were unable to travel from one area of the West Bank to another to reach hospitals and clinics, even in emergency situations. Education, agriculture and business activity had been severely disrupted. International non-governmental organization staff, including foreign nationals, had been prohibited from moving between population areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Committee believed that those measures violated the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which was applicable to all the territories occupied

by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem, as well as the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The policy of Israel contradicted the concept of peacemaking on the basis of the agreements reached between the two parties. Responses to acts of violence committed by some elements should not be directed at the Palestinian people as a whole and should not hinder the peace process.

40. On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, he called upon the Security Council and the co-sponsors of the peace process to use their strong influence to persuade Israel to end its unjust policy of closure of Israeli borders with the Palestinian territory. The international community must also persuade those parties to proceed rapidly with the peace process as the only way that a lasting peace could be achieved in the region. The Committee was also extremely worried about the negative impact on all Palestinians of the recent armed conflicts and of Israeli shelling and air raids in south Lebanon and in the suburbs of Beirut.

41. The Security Council concluded its general debate on 15 April 1996, without deciding on any specific measures with respect to the item under consideration.

42. Noting a procedural decision taken by the Security Council to simplify the list of items of which it is seized, the Chairman of the Committee, in a letter dated 16 August 1996,[10] conveyed the Committee's objection to the decision to delete from the list items related to the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the Palestine question and the Middle East problem. The Committee believed that pending a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, the core of which is the question of Palestine, in accordance with international legitimacy, those items should remain on the list of matters of which the Council is seized as they continue to engage its responsibility with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security.

43. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of September 1996,[11] as well as in response to a letter by the Permanent Representative of Egypt,[12] supporting the request for a meeting of the Security Council concerning recent developments in the occupied Arab territories and the need to take the necessary measures, including the closing of an entrance to the tunnel extending under the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem, the Council met on 27 and 28 September 1996.

44. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and stated that the decision recently taken by the Israeli Government to open a tunnel in the Old City of Jerusalem - the holiest of sites - following the closure of the Palestinian territory for several months, the confiscation of Palestinian lands to build settlements or roads around areas inhabited by Palestinians and measures of intimidation taken against the Palestinian civilian population showed that Israel wished to stifle the occupied territory economically and to deny the Palestinian people its legitimate rights to self-determination and to establish an independent State, in keeping with international legitimacy and the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

45. It is therefore important for the international community to exert pressure and take the measures necessary so that the inhumane closure of the Palestinian territory and the restrictions on the movements of Palestinians imposed by the occupying authorities are lifted; that the redeployment of Israeli troops from the town of Hebron in the West Bank should take place as called for in the interim peace accords signed by the former Israeli Government; that construction

and expansion of settlements should cease; that the tunnel should be closed once and for all; and that, finally, the protagonists - in order not to prove right the enemies of peace - should resume the peace process that had been under way since 1993.

46. Given the Israeli attitude since June 1996, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People continues to be very much concerned by the situation created by Israel for reasons of its security and to the detriment of an entire people whose legitimate aspiration is to live in peace in its homeland.

47. The Chairman took the opportunity to make an urgent appeal to the Israeli authorities to reconsider their present policy of scorn and confrontation, and to commit themselves resolutely, as the international community has constantly called for, to recreate the conditions for a climate of confidence and hope by putting the peace process back on the right track, that of a peace that is profitable to both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

48. Fifty speakers, mostly Foreign Ministers, addressed the Security Council and at the end of the debate the Council adopted resolution 1073 (1996) on 28 September 1996, with 14 votes in favour, none against and 1 abstention.

49. In the resolution, the Security Council called for the immediate cessation and reversal of all acts that had resulted in the aggravation of the situation and had had negative implications for the Middle East peace process; for the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians to be ensured; and for the immediate resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and the timely implementation of the agreements; and decided to follow closely the situation and to remain seized of the matter.

2. Attendance at international conferences and meetings

50. The Committee, through its Chairman, continued to participate in relevant meetings of intergovernmental bodies, as considered necessary. During the period since its previous report to the General Assembly, the Committee was represented by its Chairman at the sixty-fourth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the thirty-second session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization held in Yaoundé from 1 to 5 July and 8 to 10 July 1996, respectively (see A/51/524).

51. At the 222nd meeting of the Committee, on 31 July 1996, the Chairman reported that OAU had reviewed recent events in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Middle East, notably the deteriorating situation following the acts of violence that had threatened the peace process. The Organization praised the Palestinian leadership and stressed that the recent political declarations of the new Israeli Government had created great concern among leaders around the world. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and stressed the need to do everything possible to support the continuation of the peace process. The Council of Ministers of OAU adopted two resolutions, one on the question of Palestine and another on the situation in the Middle East.

3. Action taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations

52. The Committee continued to follow with great interest the activities relating to the question of Palestine of United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations. The Committee noted in particular the continued strong support of the international community for the ongoing peace process and the agreements already reached between the parties. At the same time, the international community was increasingly concerned that developments on the ground were undermining the achievements of the peace process and was intensifying its efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of the agreements reached and to promote concrete progress in the negotiations. The Committee further noted the sense of urgency with which the international community addressed the serious economic situation in the Palestinian territory and the need to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the transition period. The Committee took particular note of the following documents:

(a) Excerpts from the final communiqué and reports adopted at the annual coordination meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held in New York on 2 October 1995 (A/50/723-S/1995/927, annexes);

(b) Excerpts from the final communiqué and Muscat Declaration adopted by the sixteenth summit of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held in Muscat from 4 to 6 December 1995 (A/51/56-S/1995/1070, annex);

(c) Excerpts from the final communiqué and resolutions adopted by the twenty-third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the member countries of OIC, held in Conakry from 9 to 12 December 1995 (A/50/953-S/1996/344, annexes);

(d) Resolution 40/2, on the integration of women in the Middle East peace process, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session, held in New York from 11 to 22 March 1996;[13]

(e) Statement made by the Co-Chairmen (Egypt and the United States of America) of the Summit of Peacemakers, adopted on 13 March 1996 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt (A/51/91-S/1996/238, annex);

(f) Excerpt from the press communiqué issued by the Ministerial Council of GCC at its fifty-eighth session, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 16 and 17 March 1996 (A/51/119-S/1996/305, annex);

(g) Resolutions 1996/2 to 1996/6, on the question of Palestine and the Middle East conflict, adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-second session, held in Geneva from 18 March to 26 April 1996;[14]

(h) Excerpts from the press communiqué issued by the Ministerial Council of GCC at its fifty-ninth session, held in Riyadh on 1 and 2 June 1996 (A/51/158-S/1996/409, annex);

(i) Excerpts from the final communiqué of the Arab Summit Conference, held in Cairo from 21 to 23 June 1996 (A/50/986-S/1996/474, appendix);

(j) Excerpts from the Chairman's final statement at the summit of seven major industrialized countries (G-7), held in Lyon, France from 27 to 29 June 1996 (A/51/208-S/1996/543, annex I);

(k) Economic and Social Council resolutions 1996/5 and 1996/40, on settlements and Palestinian women, respectively, adopted at its substantive session of 1996, held in New York from 24 to 26 July 1996;

(l) Resolution CM/RES.1654(LXIV) of the Council of Ministers of OAU, on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, adopted at its sixty-fourth ordinary session, held in Yaoundé from 1 to 5 July 1996 (A/51/524, annex I);

(m) Resolutions adopted by the League of Arab States (LAS) on 15 September 1996 in Cairo;

(n) Excerpts from the press communiqué issued by the Ministerial Council of GCC at its sixtieth session, held in Riyadh on 7 and 8 September 1996 (A/51/387-S/1996/767, annex);

(o) Excerpts from the statement issued on 26 September 1996 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council;[15]

(p) Letter dated 26 September 1996 from King Hassan II of Morocco, in his capacity as President of the seventh summit of OIC and President of the Al-Quds Committee (A/51/419-S/1996/798, annex);

(q) Declaration made on 1 October 1996 by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on the Middle East peace process (A/51/447-S/1996/825, annex);

(r) Excerpts from the communiqué of the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New York on 25 September 1996 (A/51/473-S/1996/839, annex).

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 50/84 A and B

53. In accordance with the authorization given to it by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of resolution 50/84 A, the Committee decided to introduce a number of adjustments in its programme of work for 1996 in order to make it more relevant and useful to the new realities on the ground, while reducing overall expenditure in response to the financial crisis of the United Nations. In particular, the Committee considered that seminars and NGO meetings convened under its auspices continued to be a useful mechanism for in-depth consideration of priority issues and decided to continue the programme, while streamlining it and sharpening its focus for maximum usefulness. The Committee decided, as in the past, to invite Palestinian and Israeli personalities to participate in all events organized under its auspices with a view to promoting mutual understanding and a concrete and action-oriented analysis of the most important issues relating to the question of Palestine, as well as better knowledge of the work and objectives of the Committee. The Committee also decided to continue to cooperate and expand its contacts with interested non-governmental organizations in all regions, in accordance with the mandate given by the Assembly. Noting the strong desire expressed by many such organizations, the Committee also

decided to give consideration to holding an event in the territory under the Palestinian Authority to address aspects of the transition period.

54. The Committee also decided on a number of new activities geared to expanding its contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in the area under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. Specifically, the Committee envisaged inviting officials from the Authority and other Palestinian personalities to special meetings of the Committee in order to apprise its members and other delegations of the important developments on the ground and the evolving needs of the Palestinian people to be met through international action. The Committee also decided to consider ways and means of developing cooperation with and assistance to Palestinian non-governmental organizations, including participation in their meetings.

55. The Committee also requested the Division for Palestinian Rights to explore, in cooperation with the competent offices of the Secretariat, the possibility of introducing a training programme for young Palestinian professionals, from the area under the Palestinian Authority, with a view to acquiring better knowledge and understanding of the work and objectives of the United Nations. The Committee noted with appreciation that two staff members of the Authority had been invited by the Division to undertake a period of training during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

56. In carrying out the various aspects of its programme of work and in accordance with its mandate, the Committee continued to give the highest priority to promoting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; promoting the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties; and mobilizing international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee continued to cooperate with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and organizations of the United Nations system in carrying out its mandate.

1. Seminars and NGO meetings

57. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997,[16] provision was made, as in the past, for the holding of annual seminars and NGO symposia in Europe and North America, and biennially in the other regions, as well as for an international NGO meeting and two preparatory meetings of non-governmental organizations each year. The Committee decided that those events should be combined as far as possible and that some could be deferred, with the resulting savings redeployed in part towards the above-mentioned new activities. Accordingly, the Committee decided on a streamlined calendar of meetings to be held in 1996, consisting of: (a) a combined meeting of consultations with representatives of NGO coordinating committees; (b) a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people; (c) a symposium for non-governmental organizations in the North American region; and (d) a combined symposium for European non-governmental organizations and international NGO meeting. Noting that it had not organized an event in the Asian region for several years, the Committee also decided in principle to convene a combined seminar and NGO symposium in Asia in early 1997, subject to consultations with prospective host countries.

(a) Meeting of consultations with representatives of NGO coordinating committees

58. A meeting of consultations with 22 representatives of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP), the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC), and the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP) was held at Headquarters on 1 and 2 February 1996. The Bureau of the Committee informed the NGO representatives of the recent developments in the political situation, the position of the Committee and the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, and the programme of work envisaged by the Committee for 1996. For their part, the NGO participants provided information on the activities of the coordinating committees and of their member organizations, as well as of the NGO constituency at large. The meeting considered various aspects of the future cooperation between the Committee, the coordinating committees and the NGO constituency as a whole, as well as relevant activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights aimed at strengthening the NGO programme. Participants also exchanged views with regard to the format and organizational aspects of future NGO events to be organized by the Division under the auspices of the Committee.

(b) Seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people

59. A seminar with the theme "Building the Palestinian economy" was held in Cairo from 21 to 23 May 1996. The Committee expressed its great appreciation to the Government of Egypt for its cooperation in providing the venue and in the various arrangements needed for the holding of this important seminar.

60. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur; Mr. Pedro Nuñez Mosquera (Cuba); and Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine). The officers of the Committee served as officers of the Seminar in their respective capacities.

61. The opening session was addressed by Mr. Mohamed Adel El Safty, First Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. A statement on behalf of the Secretary-General was read out by his representative and Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Peter Hansen. Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Statements were also made by Mr. Zuhdi Nashashibi, Minister of Finance of the Palestinian Authority and President of the Palestine National Fund, and Mr. Said Kamal, Assistant Secretary-General of LAS.

62. The seminar was attended by representatives of 62 donor and other Governments, as well as 3 intergovernmental organizations, 16 United Nations system organizations and entities and 8 non-governmental organizations. Twenty-two experts, including several officials of the Palestinian Authority, presented papers.

63. During the seminar, the participants considered a wide range of issues related to international assistance to the Palestinian people, reconstruction and further development of the Palestinian economy and the negative effects of the repeated closures by the Israeli authorities of parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip leading to limited economic exchange between the areas under the

jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority and the disruption of Palestinian economic activity. The final report of the seminar was submitted to the Secretary-General for circulation as a document of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in a letter from the Chairman of the Committee (A/51/166-E/1996/67). It will also be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights. (For the titles of the plenary session, round-table discussions and names of experts, see annex I).

(c) North American Regional NGO Symposium

64. The United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held in New York from 24 to 26 June 1996.

65. The Committee was represented by a delegation consisting of Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Bruno E. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-Chairmen of the Committee; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

66. The Symposium was attended by representatives of 80 non-governmental organizations, 21 of them as observers, 12 panellists and workshop leaders, 16 Governments, 2 intergovernmental organizations and 6 United Nations bodies and agencies.

67. The theme of the Symposium was "Towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine". (For the titles of the plenary session topics and names of experts, see annex II).

68. Participants in the Symposium took the opportunity to exchange information and experience and to develop coordinated activities and strategies in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The participating non-governmental organizations also elected a new coordinating committee based on a revised structure that provides for rotation of half the membership every other year. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

(d) European NGO Symposium and International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine

69. In response to the wish expressed by NGO representatives participating in the meeting of consultations with the Committee, the Committee decided to hold the 1996 International NGO Meeting in the territory under the Palestinian Authority. Subsequently, at the 222nd meeting of the Committee, on 31 July 1996, the Chairman informed the Committee that in a letter addressed to Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, he had requested that the International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine be held in the territory under the Palestinian Authority, seeking his concurrence for the holding of the event. In his reply Mr. Arafat welcomed the convening of the meeting in Gaza under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority and hoped that it would have a significant and effective role to play in efforts to promote assistance to the Palestinian people.

70. The Chairman of the Committee, in a letter addressed to the Chargé d’affaires of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations, after explaining the important role of non-governmental organizations in enhancing mutual understanding and relations between Israelis and Palestinians and in promoting socio-economic development in the area under the Palestinian

Authority, sought the cooperation of the Government of Israel in certain arrangements needed for the holding of the event in Gaza.

71. However, before receiving a reply from the Permanent Mission of Israel, the Committee, having reviewed recent developments, concluded that the actual situation prevailing in the Palestinian territory as a result of the Israeli measures in violation of the agreements between the two sides and in particular the restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel on freedom of movement between the residents of Gaza and the West Bank and the isolation of the Palestinian territory from the outside world would seriously hamper the successful holding of the meeting and accordingly decided on 12 July 1996 to hold it in Geneva from 2 to 4 September 1996.

72. Subsequently, on 19 July 1996 a note verbale was received from the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat informing it of Israel's negative position with regard to the holding of the meeting. In its reply to the note verbale, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations emphasized that the Israeli-Palestinian agreements contained no provisions requiring Israeli consent to the holding of the international non-governmental organization event in Gaza City.

73. The Committee was disappointed and even saddened by the Israeli reply, which was not in line with the spirit of the peace process and ignored the constructive position advanced by the Committee since the inception of that process, as well as its efforts to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, essential foundations for a real peace between peoples. The Committee was also of the view that on the basis of the agreements reached thus far between the parties, the holding of such an event in the area under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority did not require the consent of the Israeli Government, although its cooperation in terms of ensuring free passage was needed. In view of the importance of holding such meetings in the area under the Palestinian Authority, the Committee hopes that cooperation by the Israeli Government will be forthcoming in future as a significant confidence-building measure.

74. The International NGO Meeting/European NGO Symposium was attended by 21 experts and by representatives of 80 non-governmental organizations, 16 of them as observers. It was also attended by representatives of 26 Governments, 9 United Nations agencies and bodies, 3 intergovernmental organizations, 4 NGO coordinating committees and a delegation of Palestine.

75. The Committee was represented by a delegation composed of Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Mr. Pedro Nuñez-Mosquera (Cuba); and Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

76. The programme for the meeting was formulated by the Committee taking into account suggestions made by members of ICCP and ECCP at the consultations between the Committee and NGO representatives held at New York on 1 and 2 February 1996 and in subsequent consultations with the chairpersons of both ICCP and ECCP. The central theme of the combined meeting was "Building NGO partnerships for a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine".

77. At the opening session, a message from the Secretary-General was delivered by his representative, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka

spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. A statement was made by Mr. As'ad Abdul Rahman, Member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and representative of Palestine. Statements were also made by Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of ICCP, and Mr. John Gee, Chairman of ECCP.

78. The invited experts made presentations in three plenary sessions. (For the plenary session and round-table topics and names of experts, see annex III.)

79. Participating non-governmental organizations adopted a statement in which they welcomed the positive developments associated with the Middle East peace process, but noted with great concern the repeated delays in the implementation in the letter and spirit of the agreements. Certain measures by the Israeli Government had created new, significant obstacles for the peace process, thus undermining confidence and posing a genuine threat to securing a just and lasting peace. The ongoing incarceration of Palestinian prisoners and detainees was of great concern to the non-governmental organizations. They condemned the intimidation and closure of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem and strongly denounced the Israeli acts of intimidation, humiliation and punishment of Palestinians, including closures of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, travel restrictions, hampering the freedom of worship and preventing the free movement of goods and people between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

80. The non-governmental organizations reiterated their support for the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination, the right of return and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The United Nations should play a key role in reaching a negotiated settlement. Non-governmental organizations requested that countries hosting Palestinian refugees observe and preserve their civil, social and political rights until they were allowed to exercise their right of return. The international community should fulfil the commitments undertaken to assist the Palestinian people's efforts in nation-building and political, economic and social development. The United States of America and the European Union (EU) were requested to urge Israel to comply with the concluded agreements. The non-governmental organizations congratulated the Palestinian Authority for the conduct of the first elections and reaffirmed their support for the consolidation of the rule of law, democratic values, political pluralism and the full enjoyment of the inalienable rights by the Palestinian people.

81. The non-governmental organizations declared their obligation to lobby their respective Governments and to register their concern regarding Israel's compliance with concluded agreements. Non-governmental organizations were called upon to make concerted efforts to publicize any Israeli violation of Palestinian human rights. The participating organizations urged the development of Israeli-Palestinian NGO cooperation, based on mutual understanding and commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. The non-governmental organizations would seek to generate public support for the Palestinian people through campaigns around the themes of the future of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and their expansion in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian refugees' right of return. The report of the meeting will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

2. Research, monitoring and publications

82. The Committee continued to attach great importance to the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research,

monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine, and requested the Division to continue its programme of publications, in consultation with the Committee.

83. The Committee considered that the studies, bulletins, information notes, reports and other material published by the Division should focus on the priority issues to be addressed by the Committee in 1996 in order to enhance their usefulness at that important stage.

84. The Committee noted with appreciation that the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with its mandate, continued to respond to requests for information and to prepare and disseminate the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletins covering action by the Committee, other United Nations organs, organizations and agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and others on the question of Palestine, containing the texts of the relevant resolutions, statements and decisions;

(b) The periodic bulletin, "Developments related to the Middle East peace process", containing information on the peace process and the multilateral negotiations on the Middle East regional issues;

(c) A monthly chronological summary of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on media reports and other sources;

(d) Reports of seminars and NGO meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(e) A special bulletin on the commemoration, in 1995, of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(f) A compilation of relevant resolutions, decisions and statements adopted in 1995 by the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.

85. The Committee noted with appreciation that, in response to the request made by the Committee, the Division had completed the first draft of a study on Jerusalem, and that it would continue its work on a draft study on Israeli settlements.

3. United Nations information system on the question of Palestine

86. The Committee noted that the Division, in cooperation with relevant technical services of the Secretariat, had completed the initial stages and had made substantial progress in the development of the United Nations information system on the question of Palestine, as mandated by the General Assembly at the Committee’s request. This included the acquisition of the necessary hardware and software, the inclusion in the system of a comprehensive collection of current United Nations documents and some other documentation and the establishment of a database of accredited non-governmental organizations, and other initiatives of the Division in making full use of this electronic facility in its monitoring, research and other activities. The Committee also noted that a public replica of the system had been established and was now available to outside users, and that the Division was making efforts to place some of its

documentation on the Internet. While pleased with these developments, the Committee noted that the initial mandate of the system had been given by the General Assembly in 1991 and that it was now urgent to proceed to include in the system all the major documents relevant to the question of Palestine since its inception, with particular priority to be given to documents relating to the final status issues, and to make the system as user-friendly and as widely available as possible.

4. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

87. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 1995 at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. On the occasion of the observance, in addition to other activities, an exhibit by Palestinian artists in the occupied territory entitled "Generations" was provided at Headquarters by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations and presented under the auspices of the Committee. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day had also been observed in many other cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

88. In adopting its programme of work, the Committee decided that a similar commemorative programme would be organized in connection with the observance in 1996.

VI. ACTION TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/84 C

89. Worldwide dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information remains of vital importance in heightening awareness of and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

90. The General Assembly considers the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general, including the achievements of the peace process. The programme contributes effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

91. Within this framework, the General Assembly requested the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1996-1997, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

92. The resolution identifies six particular areas of activity the Department is to focus upon in carrying out its assignment relative to the programme. It is within those parameters that the Committee reports on the activities of the Department.

Dissemination of information

93. The resolution requested the dissemination of information on all the activities of the United Nations system relating to the question of Palestine, including reports on the work carried out by the relevant United Nations organizations.

94. The Department continued to provide press coverage of meetings held at Headquarters of United Nations bodies dealing with the question of Palestine and coverage of seminars and symposia of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened away from Headquarters.

95. Different methods were used by the Department to provide for this dissemination. These include press releases and briefings, publications and radio news bulletins and feature programmes. In addition, the Department’s Dissemination Unit has responded to a number of requests for information and utilized the Internet and e-mail to disseminate material.

96. The Department’s Public Inquiries Unit responded to 465 requests for information concerning Middle East issues, including the question of Palestine. During the same period, the Department’s Group Programme Unit organized eight briefings for a total audience of 251.

97. The Department’s Dissemination Unit distributed 75 titles on the Palestine issue to more than 200 recipients around the world, on the Internet, by e-mail or as hard copies. The materials were disseminated in English and French.

98. The department’s NGO Section continued to disseminate information materials through the NGO Resources Centre. The global network of United Nations information centres and services actively promoted the central issue relating to

the question of Palestine, organizing media activities and special events and regularly disseminating relevant information materials made available from Headquarters.

99. Information centres and services in Amman, Cairo, Jakarta, Madrid, New Delhi, Sana'a and Tokyo gave special attention to the question of Palestine through articles in their newsletters, in addition to ensuring the dissemination of press releases, backgrounders and statements by the Secretary-General and other officials. These activities generated local media coverage and resulted in increased requests for information on the Middle East question at some information centre libraries.

100. The Committee has taken positive note of this effort. The continued evolution of developments is demanding and requires an enhancement of present structures in order to carry out the obligations as set out in resolution 50/84 C. Through such change one could assure not only wider dissemination and better use of the electronic media available but also assure in this process the promptness and comprehensive information the public in general and the media and non-governmental organizations in particular are accustomed to in this day and age.

Publications

101. The General Assembly requested the Department to continue to issue and update publications on various aspects of the question of Palestine in all fields, including materials concerning the recent developments in that regard and, in particular, the achievements of the peace process.

102. The quarterly UN Chronicle has continued its comprehensive coverage of Palestinian issues, including relevant General Assembly and Security Council actions, as well as special meetings, symposia and seminars.

103. The publication "The United Nations and the Question of Palestine", continues to be a comprehensive historical source of information. This publication and the poster "Self-Determination: An Inalienable Right of the Palestinian People" were available in Arabic, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. The publication was also disseminated in Chinese. The Department has also initiated the updating for 1997 of a new edition of that brochure.

104. The Committee feels that utilization of the facilities provided by modern electronic media in the manipulation of text could facilitate the production of new publications, which, other than providing the historical perspective, focus on the new avenues that are part and parcel of the success of the peace process. Material submitted by participants in symposia and seminars organized by the Committee, which include statesmen, parliamentarians, academics, journalists and other key figures active in the field, could provide the raw material to produce those materials concerning the recent developments and in particular the achievements of the peace process which the General Assembly called for in its resolution.

Audio-visual material

105. The Department's Radio and Central News Service provided a wide range of coverage on the question of Palestine and related issues in daily news bulletins, weekly news magazines and feature programmes in official and non-official languages for worldwide dissemination.

106. Some of the highlights covered in the news bulletins and news magazines included the successful holding of the Palestinian elections; the Secretary-General's meeting with Yasser Arafat, President of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council; the negative effects of the closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on the Palestinian people; the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Palestine and the opening of UNRWA headquarters in the Gaza Strip; the United Nations seminar focusing on building the Palestinian economy; the new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects in the occupied territories; and a feature on a Palestinian woman setting up a business in the West Bank.

107. A number of other topics given extensive coverage were the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, seminars and symposia of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as well as meetings of the Committee, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as they dealt with the question of Palestine.

108. In addition, the Central News Service produced five feature programmes exclusively devoted to the question of Palestine, namely, "Challenges of Peace in the Palestinian Question" (Arabic); "Updated Review of the Palestinian Question in General Assembly's discussion of the UNRWA Report" (Arabic); "Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the Light of New Realities in the Current Phase of the Peace Process" (Arabic); "UNRWA: 45 Years of Service to Palestinian Refugees" (French); and "UNRWA as a Crucial Element in the Success of the Peace Process" (Russian).

109. "World Chronicle", the 30-minute panel discussion video programme, featured Ambassador Ilter Türkmen, Commissioner-General of UNRWA. Ambassador Türkmen reviewed the achievements of the Agency and discussed its future in the light of recent developments in the Middle East.

110. A Japanese language version of the video "Palestine 1890s-1990s" was produced by the United Nations information centre in Tokyo for local screening.

111. The Committee recognizes the distinct effort made by the Department's Radio and Central News Service. The service provided in the audio media has been effective and prompt. There exists a quantitative imbalance in audio and video productions that goes beyond the disproportion that it is customary to assume in view of the different cost of production. That imbalance is magnified by the greater dependence world public opinion has on visual media. The Committee is convinced that the Department will take the necessary steps in the course of the biennium to address the imbalance in order to remedy it.

Fact-finding news missions

112. The General Assembly requested the Department as part of its special programme to organize and promote fact-finding news missions for journalists to the area, including the territories under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority and the occupied territories.

113. The Committee notes that no such missions were carried out during the period under review contrary to previous years. Since the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles, this aspect of the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine should be strengthened.

114. Undoubtedly the Department's role as point of reference for the international media in the region suffers if a vacuum is allowed to persist in this regard. As was evident during the key events that have marked the period under review, the international media have been present in the region and have focused on aspects that are of immediate news value. The purpose of fact-finding missions would be that of providing accurate and comprehensive information that is vital and conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

Encounters for journalists

115. The Department of Public Information was requested by the General Assembly to organize international, regional and national encounters for journalists.

116. The Department organized a number of meetings for journalists, in particular in preparation for or on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

117. These meetings do not fall in any of the three types of encounters called for by the resolution however. The General Assembly also requested the Department to continue its specialized programme, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America. The Committee notes that in the period under review, no national, regional or international encounters were organized as had been customary in the past.

118. Noting this, the Committee emphasizes the need for all aspects of the General Assembly resolution and its specific requests to be implemented.

Assistance in the field of Palestinian media development

119. The General Assembly requested the Department to provide, in cooperation with specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development.

120. The United Nations information centre in Paris has participated in talks with UNESCO and the European Journalists' Training School's Association on the development and organization of training courses for Palestinian journalists.

121. The Department is again organizing in the autumn of 1996 a training programme for media practitioners along the lines of the successful one introduced by the Department in autumn 1995.

122. The 1996 programme enabled 10 Palestinian journalists to come to Headquarters from 15 September to 8 November 1996. Their programme included, among other things, briefings by officials of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as by representatives of media organizations in the United States; a skills training internship at CNN headquarters at Atlanta; two weeks of special classes at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs; and on-the-job training serving as temporary United Nations correspondents, covering United Nations meetings and activities on behalf of their media organizations.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

123. The Department cooperated at Headquarters with the Department of Political Affairs in media promotion and other arrangements for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

124. The annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People provided several information centres with an opportunity to extend their outreach efforts to include resident Palestinian communities.

125. The United Nations information centre in Moscow, in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, organized a meeting of high-level officials, Arab ambassadors, non-governmental organizations and the media, and arranged for an exhibition of UNRWA photographs and relevant public information materials. The United Nations information centre in New Delhi disseminated the backgrounder on the annual observance in local languages. The United Nations information centre in Lagos organized a commemorative ceremony dealing with issues of peace and development, in cooperation with the Arab group of ambassadors in Nigeria and with the participation of more than 400 people. The United Nations information centre in Tripoli, in cooperation with the Embassy of Palestine in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, members of the diplomatic corps, non-governmental organizations and the Palestinian community in Tripoli, celebrated the Day with a cultural programme.

Media relations and logistical support

126. Three information centres provided media relations and logistical support for major seminars dealing with the question of Palestine.

127. The United Nations information centre in Cairo lent such support for a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in connection with the visit of representatives of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and for a three-day seminar on building the Palestinian economy organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

128. The United Nations information centre in Paris, at the request of the Division for Palestinian Rights, assisted with arrangements for a United Nations seminar on Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges.

Concluding remarks

129. The Committee has noted the efforts undertaken by the Department over the past year. It appreciates the results but notes that some important aspects of the resolution with regard to the special information programme have yet to be implemented. The requests made by the General Assembly to the Department need to be borne in mind in an assessment of performance.

130. A more regular and structured process of cooperation and coordination of the Department with the Committee, as called for by the resolution, should assist in identifying and overcoming difficulties that may be encountered in the organization of specific events and thus ensure full implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/84 C.

131. In view of this need, two meetings were held during the period under review between members of the Bureau and senior officials of the Department, in which the officials stated that constraints imposed by diminished resources had influenced the review of all the programmes that fall under the responsibility of the Department, including that related to the question of Palestine. However, it was agreed that more regular consultations between the Committee and the Department would be beneficial in identifying the most efficient manner to utilize existing resources in order to implement all aspects of the resolution during the current biennium.

132. The Committee welcomes the Chairman’s report about his discussions with the Department of Public Information and the assurance that he has already put in place a process of full implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions in full cooperation and consultation between the Bureau of the Committee and the Department to prepare the information programme for the coming year.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

133. The past year was one of great hopes and great disappointments, as the enthusiasm generated by the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of September 1995 and the first Palestinian election, which followed the Israeli redeployment from six West Bank towns and a number of villages, gave way to feelings of despair over the very future of the peace process in view of the renewed cycle of violence in the area, delays in the implementation of the agreements reached, the prolonged closure of the territories, with its grave economic consequences, and the resumption of the policy of settlements.

134. Believing that there is no peaceful alternative to the negotiations courageously undertaken by the parties, the Committee considers it essential for the international community to intensify its efforts in support of the historic process of reconciliation between the two sides and for the effective implementation of the agreements reached and for the resumption of all aspects of the negotiations on the agreed basis. The Committee notes that the year 1997 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the military occupation of the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, an occupation that still continues over most of the Palestinian land despite the historic achievements of the peace process. Fifty years will have elapsed since the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 partitioning mandated Palestine; 10 years since the beginning of the intifada, the Palestinian uprising, which through the sacrifice of many young people helped create the conditions for progress in the peace efforts. These milestones in the long history of the Palestinian struggle for the attainment of their inalienable national rights are a measure of the long road that still remains to be travelled and provide an impetus for intensified international action in the year to come.

135. The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached. The Committee reiterates that the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, both as the guardian of international legitimacy and in the mobilization and provision of international assistance, is essential for the successful outcome of the peace efforts. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee believes that its own role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period and until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

136. The Committee reaffirms that such a settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, the principle of exchange of land for peace and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. The Committee also insists that, during the interim period, Israel must recognize and respect its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

137. The Committee calls in particular for an end to the policy and practice of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, prejudges the final status negotiations by creating facts on the ground and is therefore contrary to the

letter and the spirit of the agreements between the parties, and poses a grave threat to the future of the peace process.

138. Noting that the tragic clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in September 1996 began with protest demonstrations over Israel's archaeological excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem, the Committee reaffirms the particular status of the City in accordance with several United Nations resolutions. The Committee recalls that the Security Council has repeatedly affirmed that all measures altering the geographical, demographic and historical character and status of the Holy City are null and void and must be rescinded.

139. While remaining firm on these positions of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work, taking into account the new realities, in order to make a concrete contribution to promoting the implementation of the agreements reached and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee invites the General Assembly once again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate with overwhelming support.

140. The Committee wishes to express its great appreciation to those States which have supported its work and facilitated the organization of events held under the Committee's auspices by providing venues and participating in the debates. The Committee believes that, in the light of the new situation and the constructive position of the Committee reflected in its programme of work, the time has come for all States to recognize the valuable contribution that it can make as a forum for dialogue, analysis, exchange of expertise, mobilization of public opinion and action in support of the peace efforts and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their socio-economic development. The Committee considers that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work, would greatly enhance the contribution of the General Assembly to promoting peace at this important stage.

141. The Committee considers that its programme of seminars in the different regions has played a useful role in informing and mobilizing public opinion, promoting exchange of experience and expertise between participants from the various regions and Palestinians and Israelis and in promoting increased involvement by Governments in the search for a just and comprehensive solution of the conflict. The annual convening of a seminar devoted specifically to issues related to the economic and social challenges facing the Palestinian people during the transitional period has proved very useful and the Committee intends to continue this practice in order to give the international donor community, including United Nations bodies and agencies, the opportunity to exchange views with representatives of the Palestinian Authority and internationally renowned experts on relevant issues.

142. In view of the current serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the Committee intends to encourage renewed, intensified efforts by non-governmental organizations to organize and coordinate sustained campaigns to inform public opinion and to promote national and international action in support of United Nations resolutions and the Committee's objectives. It plans to continue its programme of NGO meetings in the various regions with a view to providing the NGO constituency with periodic analysis of political developments, a forum for an exchange of views and experience, as well as for planning and coordinating specific NGO activities. Encouraging mutual information and cooperation and enlarging the NGO network remain important goals for the Committee. Noting the continued desire of

non-governmental organizations to hold a future meeting in the area under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, the Committee reiterates its call to the Government of Israel not to interfere in a negative manner in this endeavour as an important confidence-building measure.

143. The Committee emphasizes the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. The Committee requests the Division to continue its programme of publications, in consultation with the Committee, and to pay particular attention to finalizing the proposed study on settlements during the coming year. The Committee notes with appreciation the further progress made by the Division in developing the United Nations computer-based information system on the question of Palestine and in making it available to users, including the establishment of a home page on the Internet, and calls for intensified efforts to include all relevant documentation in the system, including, if necessary, the redeployment of funds from lower-priority activities in the Division's budget.

144. Noting further the successful introduction in the Division of a pilot project for the training of staff of the Palestinian Authority in the workings of the United Nations system, the Committee requests the Division to continue this exercise in the future.

145. The Committee will continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its work programme in the light of developments, in order to continue to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Notes

[1] Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) did not participate in the work of the Committee.

[2] Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35).

[3] Ibid., Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/32/35); ibid., Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/33/35); ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/35/35); ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/36/35); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/38/35); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/39/35); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/42/35); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/43/35); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/44/35); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/45/35); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/46/35); ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/47/35); ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/48/35); ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/49/35); and ibid., Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/50/35).

[4] A/AC.183/1995/CRP.1.

[5] The observers at the Committee meetings were as follows: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Palestine, represented by the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, was also an observer.

[6] The membership of the Working Group was as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Guinea, Guyana, India, Malta, Pakistan, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Palestine, represented by the PLO, as the representative of the people directly concerned.

[7] GA/PAL/734.

[8] S/1996/257.

[9] See S/PV.3652 (Resumption).

[10] S/1996/667.

[11] S/1996/790.

[12] S/1996/792.

[13] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26), chap. I, sect. C.

[14] Ibid., Supplement No. 3 (E/1996/23).

[15] S/1996/802, annex.

[16] See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1), vol. I, part II, sect. 2.

ANNEX I

United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held in Cairo from 21 to 23 May 1996

1. The programme for the seminar began with a plenary session on "Building the Palestinian economy - challenges and prospects". Statements were made by a Palestinian keynote speaker, Mr. Zuhdi Nashashibi, Minister of Finance of the Palestinian Authority, President of the Palestine National Fund, United Nations agencies and bodies, donor countries and other government representatives, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

2. Subsequently, four round-table discussions, moderated by experts, were conducted, as follows:

(a) International assistance to the Palestinian people - experience and perspective: Palestinian institutions; United Nations programmes; Multilateral channels of assistance; Bilateral assistance; International and regional cooperation

Mr. Robert Z. Lawrence, Professor of International Trade, Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, Harvard University (Moderator)

Mr. Odin G. Knudsen, representative of the World Bank in the West Bank and Gaza

Ms. Ghania Malhees, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Economy, Trade and Industry, Palestinian Authority

Mr. Nabil El Sharif, Deputy Managing Director, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), Gaza, Director, Palestinian Water Authority

Mr. Henry Siegman, Director, US/Middle East Project, and Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, New York

Mr. Geoffrey Haley, Aid Coordinator for Technical Assistance, Office of the European Union to the West Bank and Gaza

(b) Trade sector: Implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian economic agreements; Trade prospects with Arab countries; Bilateral trade agreements

Mr. James Duesenberry, Professor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (Moderator)

Mr. Robert Z. Lawrence, Professor of International Trade, Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, Harvard University

Mr. Samir Huleileh, Assistant Deputy Minister of Trade, Ministry of the Economy, Trade and Industry, Palestinian Authority

Mr. Hanspeter Tschäni, trade policy expert, Swiss Trade Initiative for the Middle East and North Africa (STIMENA), former Head, Trade Division, European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

Mr. Jean-Michel Dumont, Secretary-General, Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation

Mr. Taha Abdel Aleem, Deputy Director, El Ahram Centre for Strategic Studies

Mr. Yousef Mahmoud Najem, Palestine Chamber of Commerce, Gaza Strip

(c) The role of financial institutions: Palestinian monetary institutions; reinvesting private deposits; promotion of small business

Mr. Hanspeter Tschäni, trade policy expert, STIMENA, former Head, Trade Division, EFTA (Moderator)

Mr. Ahmad Mashal, Head, Research Department, Palestinian Monetary Authority

Mr. James Duesenberry, Professor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed Al Takruri, Deputy Regional Manager, Cairo-Amman Bank, West Bank

Mr. Said Hammoud, Secretary, Founding Committee, Salam International Investment

(d) The housing sector: short-, middle- and long-term policies and needs; role of the public sector; involvement of the private sector; financial policies and incentives; and employment opportunities

Mr. Khaled Abdel Shafie, Head, UNDP Office, Gaza (Moderator)

Mr. Marwan Abdul Hamid, Assistant Deputy Minister of Housing and Public Works, Palestinian Authority

Mr. James Ryan, Chairman, Shahrazad Homes

Mr. Ali Sha’at, Assistant Deputy Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Palestinian Authority

Mr. Walid Hasna, Chief Engineer, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP)

Mr. Milad Hanna, writer, former Chairman, Committee on Housing and Construction, Egyptian Parliament

Mr. Mohamed M. Ziara, Director-General, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Palestinian Authority

ANNEX II

United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, held in New York from 24 to 26 June 1996

1. The plenary sessions of the Symposium discussed the issues of self-determination and state-building, Palestine refugees and displaced persons, and Jerusalem. Following are the names of experts who took part in the discussions:

(a) Self-determination, state-building - opportunities and obstacles

Mr. Izzat Abdul-Hadi, Director, Bisan Centre for Research and Development, Ramallah, West Bank

Ms. Samia Khoury, President, Rawdat Al-Zuhur Women's Organization, Representative of Palestinian Network of NGOs, Jerusalem

Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

(b) Palestine refugees and displaced persons

Mr. Salim Tamari, Professor of Sociology, Director, Institute of Jerusalem Studies, Bir Zeit University, delegate to the multilateral peace negotiations on refugees

Mr. Andrew Robinson, Director-General, Middle East Peace Process Coordination Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada

Ms. Rosemary Sayigh, anthropologist, author, independent researcher, Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Don Peretz, Professor Emeritus, Binghamton University, New York

Mr. William Lee, Chief, UNRWA Liaison Office, New York

(c) Jerusalem

Mr. Ziad Abu Zayyad, Member, Palestinian Council, Jerusalem District, journalist, editor and publisher of the Palestine-Israel Journal

Mr. Moshe Maoz, Professor in History of the Middle East, Director, Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University

Mr. Ibrahim Mattar, Deputy Director, America Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), Jerusalem

Mr. Stephen Zunes, Professor of Politics, University of San Francisco, California

2. The workshops addressed the following topics: building civil society; NGO work and developments and the current and continuing political changes; opportunities for development; the peace process and the diaspora community; work and cooperation between refugees and non-governmental organizations; Jerusalem: the closure and shifting borders; and the future of Jerusalem.

ANNEX III

United Nations European NGO Symposium and International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at Geneva from 2 to 4 September 1996

1. The plenary and round-table discussions focused on the recent developments, key issues of a just and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, and building NGO partnerships for a just and comprehensive settlement. The following experts participated in the discussions:

(a) Recent political developments

1. The status of the implementation of the concluded agreements

Mr. Ziad Abu Amr, Member, Palestinian Council

2. Israeli elections and Israeli public opinion

Mr. Azmi Bishara, Member, Knesset (National Democratic Assembly)

Mr. Yossi Katz, Member, Knesset (Labour Party)

3. Arab and international reaction to the recent political developments

Mr. Ahmed Hamroush, President, Egyptian Committee for Solidarity

Mr. Michael Hindley, Member, European Parliament (Socialist Party), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(b) Key issues of a just and comprehensive settlement

1. Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory

Mr. Sharif S. Elmusa, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, D.C.

Ms. Zahaba Galón, Secretary-General, Ratz

Mr. Geoffrey Aronson, Editor, Foundation for Middle East Peace, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Jan de Jong, geographer, planning consultant, St. Yves Legal Resource and Development Centre, Jerusalem

2. Palestine refugees and displaced persons

Mr. Rashid Khalidi, Professor of Middle East History and Director, Center for International Studies, Chicago University

Mr. Avishai Margalit, Professor of Philosophy, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Mr. Leonard Hausman, Director, Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

3. Jerusalem

Mr. Albert Aghazarian, Director for Public Relations, Bir Zeit University

Mr. Gershon Baskin, Co-Director, Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information, Jerusalem

Mr. David Andrews, Spokesman of Fianna Fail for Tourism and Trade, Member of Dail Eriann, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland

Mr. Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos, Member, European Parliament (European People's Party), Greece

(c) Building non-governmental organization partnerships for a just and comprehensive settlement

1. Defining priorities and implementing action plans

Mr. Marai Abdul Rahman, Secretary-General, Palestine Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations, Director-General, Arab and International Relations Department, PLO

Mr. Michael Warschawski, Director, Alternative Information Centre, Jerusalem

Mr. Mustafa Barghouthi, Director, Health Development Information Project, Jerusalem

Mr. Don Betz, Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine

Mr. John Gee, Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine.

2. In addition to the plenary sessions, a number of workshops were held concurrently for participants interested in developing specific action-oriented proposals. The workshop topics were linked to those addressed in the plenary sessions.