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

Draft programme of work for 1999

I. Mandate of the Committee

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the year 1999 is contained in General Assembly resolutions 53/39, 53/40 and 53/41 of 2 December 1998.

2. In its resolution 53/39 entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter VII of its report; requested it to keep the situation relating to the question of Palestine under review and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate; 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 may 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-fourth session and thereafter. It also requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to mobilize international solidarity with and support for the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and to involve additional NGOs in its work. The Assembly also requested the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to

make available to it, at its request, the relevant information which they have at their disposal.

3. In its resolution 53/40, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continues to carry out its programme of work as detailed in relevant earlier resolutions, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance, including, in particular, for the organization of meetings in various regions with the participation of all sectors of the international community; the further development and expansion of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL); the preparation and widest possible dissemination of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine; the provision of assistance in completing the project on the modernization of the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine; and the provision of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority.

4. In its resolution 53/41, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat", 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, its special information programme for the biennium 1998-1999 and indicated a set of activities to be carried out under the programme.



II. Priority issues in the programme of work of the Committee for 1999

5. The Committee has reviewed the various aspects of its own programme of work and that of the Division for Palestinian Rights, as well as of the mandates governing them. The Committee believes that a number of adjustments in this programme are necessary in order to optimize its responsiveness to the evolving situation in the peace process and on the ground and its effectiveness in promoting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

6. The Committee strongly believes that, as humankind prepares to enter the new millennium, it is incumbent upon the co-sponsors of the peace process, the Security Council and the international community as a whole to do everything within their power to achieve peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. In this context, the Committee expresses the hope that the Wye River Memorandum, signed on 23 October 1998, will be fully implemented, provide the much-needed impetus to the Oslo process and help the parties to move forward to the negotiations on permanent status issues, which should conclude by 4 May 1999. The Committee expresses great concern at the breakdown of the peace process following the freezing of the implementation of the Wye River agreements. It will continue to emphasize in its various activities the importance of the full and timely implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements signed to date.

7. The Committee expresses its full support for the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session and states that it will continue to remain engaged in the follow-up to those recommendations, especially the convening of the conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

8. The Committee is of the view that its programme of meetings in the various regions and its cooperation with NGOs has played a useful role in heightening international awareness of the relevant issues. In light of this, the Committee stressed the need to achieve maximum effectiveness in the programme of meetings and other activities and to respond adequately to developments on the ground and in the peace process.

9. In response to the call by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Yasser Arafat, for the holding of the millennial celebrations at Bethlehem in the context of global peace and reconciliation, the item entitled "Bethlehem 2000" was included in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the

General Assembly at the request of the Committee. The Committee notes in that regard the adoption, without a vote, of General Assembly resolution 53/27 of 18 November 1998, entitled "Bethlehem 2000". The Committee will continue to support the Bethlehem 2000 Project and will devote some of its activities to mobilizing wide international support for this historic event.

10. The Committee believes that the cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights should be strengthened. The Committee has also requested that the Department give particular attention to the preparation of audio-visual and other informational materials aimed at the general public.

III. Activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights

A. Action by the Committee

11. In implementation of its mandate, the Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to participate in relevant meetings of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, requiring international action.

12. The Committee considers that its participation in high-level conferences and meetings, an important aspect of its effort to promote international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, should be continued.

13. The Committee will continue, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, to expand its contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including NGOs, in the areas under its jurisdiction and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. The Committee will consider inviting Palestinian officials and other Palestinian personalities to meetings of the Committee on particular occasions, as required. The Committee will also give consideration to the possibility of sending a delegation to visit the Palestinian territory at an appropriate time, in conjunction with one of its meetings held in the region.

14. The Bureau of the Committee will continue its consultations with countries interested in the programme of work of the Committee, including members of the European

Union, with a view to promoting understanding of its objectives and greater participation in its activities.

15. The Committee has convened the Bethlehem 2000 International Conference, to be held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, on 18 and 19 February 1999. The Committee expresses its great appreciation to the Government of Italy for its support in organizing this event and hopes that the Conference will contribute to the successful implementation of the Bethlehem 2000 Project, as well as promote international public awareness with regard to the plight of the Palestinian people and the urgent need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

B. Meetings and conferences

16. In order to achieve greater impact through its meetings and conferences, as well as to heighten its responsiveness to developments in the peace process and on the ground and to be more inclusive with respect to all relevant actors, the Committee has decided to further restructure and consolidate its meetings programme. Accordingly, the Committee examined questions relating to periodicity, regional breakdown, format and participation, as well as modalities of cooperation with NGOs.

17. As authorized by the General Assembly, the Committee, in the past, has made adjustments in its meetings programme in order to respond to new developments. In 1999, the Committee will continue to strive, in cooperation with prospective host countries and institutions and the competent Secretariat services, to limit costs for conference facilities, equipment and servicing staff, while ensuring the success of the meetings.

18. The Committee considers that, in the light of the success of the Conference in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, held at Brussels on 24 and 25 February 1998, which introduced a new format and gained high-level participation and support, it will emphasize thematic events in the course of 1999 and seek to encourage involvement by additional countries and organizations, including those which have not so far participated fully in the programme of work of the Committee.

19. Keeping in mind General Assembly resolution 53/27 entitled "Bethlehem 2000" and the importance of the Bethlehem 2000 Project launched by the Palestinian Authority, the Committee will hold a major activity devoted

to supporting the Project and thereby promoting peace and reconciliation on the eve of the new millennium. As noted above, the Bethlehem 2000 International Conference will be held at FAO headquarters in Rome, on 18 and 19 February 1999.

20. The Committee will hold an event for the African region in Windhoek in April 1999, with the support of the Government of Namibia. In the light of above-mentioned objectives and priorities of the Committee, this event will be called the "African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People".

21. The Committee is of the view that another thematic event and an assistance seminar should be held in Cairo, tentatively in June 1999.

22. Accordingly, the calendar of meetings and conferences to be held in 1999 will be as follows:

(a) The Bethlehem 2000 International Conference, Rome, 18 and 19 February 1999;

(b) The African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Windhoek, 20 to 22 April 1999;

(c) A thematic event followed by an assistance seminar in the Middle East, June 1999.

23. The Committee is grateful to the Governments of Italy and Namibia for having agreed to provide the venue for the above-mentioned meetings to be held in their respective capitals.

24. The Committee will also explore the possibility of holding joint events with the Department of Public Information in order to maximize participation and impact.

C. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

25. In the context of its overall programme review, the Committee examined the modalities of cooperation with NGOs. The Committee stresses the importance of the role of NGOs in mobilizing international solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for the achievement of its inalienable rights.

26. The Committee will continue to develop the most effective means of cooperation with NGOs, including reaching out to a broader spectrum of civil society, in order to maximize support for the work and objectives of the Committee, as well as ensure concrete follow-up to meetings and provide needed assistance to Palestinian organizations.

In that regard, the Committee will restructure its NGO programme, including its programme of meetings, to enhance its effectiveness and responsiveness to evolving political realities.

27. Accordingly, the Committee requests the Division, in consultation with the Committee, to develop new and more flexible ways of communicating and cooperating with NGOs on an individual basis, making maximum use of available electronic facilities.

28. As some programmed NGO meetings will not be held in 1999, it is proposed that the Committee, bearing in mind the need for maximum cost-effectiveness, utilize the resulting savings for the following:

(a) Participation by a representative of the Committee and/or Division for Palestinian Rights in significant conferences, meetings or other events organized by NGOs and other civil society organizations;

(b) Assistance to Palestinian organizations in sending representatives to meetings held under the auspices of the Committee and in providing speakers for meetings organized by other NGOs;

(c) Preparation and publication by the Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information, of documentation aimed at the general public that can be reproduced and made available in large quantities;

(d) Periodic visits by members of the Committee and staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights to the territory under the Palestinian Authority to brief local NGOs and institutions on the work of the Committee and to assess their needs that can be met through the Division's programme of work.

29. The aforementioned steps should strengthen the cooperation of the Committee and the Division with the international network of NGOs on the question of Palestine and achieve greater effectiveness in providing support to the Palestinian people.

D. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

30. The Committee attaches great importance to the continued development of UNISPAL, as mandated by the General Assembly in 1991. The Division for Palestinian Rights will continue to expand the UNISPAL documents collection and will further develop the question of Palestine and UNISPAL sites on the Internet. The Committee requests

the Division, in consultation with the Committee, to continue to identify and include in the collection old documents relevant to the question of Palestine. The Committee further requests the Division to accelerate its work on UNISPAL, determine the scope of the United Nations and other relevant documentation to be included in the UNISPAL collection and suggest to the Committee a time-frame for the completion of this activity.

31. The Committee also requests the Division to continue its work on modernizing records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission and to make an effort to complete the present stage of work at the end of the first trimester of 1999. The Committee recommends that any additional documents of relevance to the project be converted electronically and that savings achieved in the Committee's programme of work for 1999 be used for this purpose.

E. Other activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights

Publications

32. The Committee considers that the Division should continue to prepare and issue in a timely manner its periodic publications, namely:

(a) Monthly bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;

(b) Periodic bulletins on developments in the peace process;

(c) Monthly chronological summary of events relating to the question of Palestine;

(d) Annual compilation of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council;

(e) Reports of meetings held under the auspices of the Committee;

(f) Annual bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

33. In addition, the Committee requests the Division to continue to prepare its informal periodic summary of information on significant activities of NGOs relevant to the question of Palestine for the information of the Committee and for communication to the network of NGOs. The Committee also requests the Division to assess the usefulness of this publication, in consultation with NGO users, with a view to improving its format and enhancing its effectiveness.

34. Further, the Committee requests the Division, in consultation with the Bureau, to review existing studies and information notes published by the Division and to make proposals with regard to those that need updating, also keeping in mind the need for the preparation of informational material for the general public, as mentioned above. The Committee also requests the Division to explore the possibility of preparing a study on the work of the United Nations Conciliation Commission.

**Training programme for staff of the
Palestinian Authority**

35. The Committee considers that this useful programme, carried out in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, should be continued and strengthened, drawing on the expertise of the relevant United Nations institutions. The Committee considers that the experience gained by the Division in the previous years of the training programme should be evaluated, in consultation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine, with a view to further maximizing the programme's usefulness for Palestinian Authority trainees.

**Observance of the International Day of
Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

36. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Monday, 29 November 1999. It is envisaged that the observance will take place at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and elsewhere in accordance with established practice.

37. The Committee will again commemorate this anniversary with a solemn meeting and other activities, including, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, the presentation of a cultural exhibit at United Nations Headquarters during the week beginning 29 November 1999.

38. The Committee will continue to review and assess its programme of work on the basis of experience and in the light of new developments and in order to make additional adjustments as needed.
