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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 26 July 1999, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia)  
(Vice-President)

CONTENTS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING  
CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY,  
INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN  
(continued)

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 50/227 and 52/12B

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (continued) (A/54/152-E/1999/92)

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) said that the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories of Palestine and of the Syrian Golan was a classical example of denial of the right to self-determination. That occupation had had a direct and serious impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by the Arab peoples in the occupied territories and on their living conditions. The corollary of that occupation was the settlement policy pursued by the Israeli authorities, which was paralleled by a policy of expulsion of Palestinians and confiscation of their lands. The Israeli settlement policy was designed to stifle the natural growth of Palestinian localities by establishing settlements all round them; that policy was not of a nature to encourage the two communities to live in an atmosphere of good neighbourliness.

The living conditions of the Arab peoples in the occupied territories were particularly difficult; they derived no benefit from the provisions, rights and protections laid down in the fourth Geneva Convention and which the international community had recognized as applicable to them. The repeated and arbitrary closure of the territories occupied by the Israeli authorities constituted a blameworthy collective punishment, since it had not only immediate repercussions - on workers unable to go to their places of work, sick people shut off from access to treatment, peasants unable to sell their produce - but also medium- and long-term effects on the schooling of children and on the health and nutrition standards of the Arab peoples.

One of the preconditions for peace and stability was an improvement in the living conditions of the Arab peoples. The peace agreements should give rise to concrete changes with a view to the building of mutual trust. The ending of the Israeli occupation, thus enabling the Arab peoples to take responsibility for their own affairs and to fix their own destinies, was therefore a matter of urgency. At the same time it was incumbent on the Israeli authorities to take the necessary measures to reverse the pernicious consequences for the Arab peoples of the settlement policy and to bring to an end the many and repeated violations of international law. Finally, the representative of Algeria

requested the President to take note of his protest at the late distribution of the note by the Secretary-General dated 25 June (A/54/152-E/1999/92).

Mr. AL-HUSSAMY (Syrian Arab Republic) considered that the occupation by force and the settlement of lands was one of the most serious examples of aggression, since the two measures brought in their wake a real repression of the population. The economic and social consequences of those measures could be reversed only by the ending of the occupation. In that connection he particularly drew the attention of the members of the Council to paragraphs 4, 5, 18, 19 and 55 - 60 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/54/152-E/1999/92). He also recalled the contents of resolution 53/196, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 15 December 1998, and resolution 1998/32 approved by the Council on 29 July 1998.

The Syrian economy was suffering from the consequences of the illegal occupation of the Golan, not only because it had been deprived of the natural resources of that region, but also because it had to bear the burden of thousands of displaced persons. The Syrian delegation requested the Council to give all due attention to the matter under consideration and to call once again on Israel to abandon its settlement policy, to respect all the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention, to cease plundering the resources of the Arab territories and to end the occupation thereof. The obstacles to the economic and social development of the region as a whole could only be removed through the return of lands to their legitimate owners within the framework of a general peace settlement.

Mr. RAMLAWI (Observer for Palestine) thanked the United Nations system and the countries which were assisting the Palestinian people, who were impatiently awaiting their freedom from Israeli military occupation. He asked the United Nations bodies and the freedom- and justice-loving countries to increase their support for the Palestinian people to enable the latter to exercise its sovereignty in accordance with the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the rules of international law.

He drew attention to the provisions of Council resolution 1998/32 and the note by the Secretary-General (A/54/152-E/1999/92). He said that the creation of a Palestinian State was being prevented by obstacles created by the occupation authorities. On 24 July 1999 the Palestinian authorities had expressed grave concern over the fact that settlement activities were continuing

notwithstanding the commitment of the new Israeli government to implement the Wye River Memorandum. They had called upon the new government to put an end to the settlement policy, which recalled one of the apartheid regime in South Africa and which, as the Secretary-General demonstrated in his note (A/54/152-E/1999/92), not only compromised the peace process but also had serious economic and social repercussions on the situation of the Palestinians. The Palestinian delegation would submit a draft resolution on the subject.

Mr. ABDELMONEIM MOSTAFA (Observer for Egypt) recalled that the peace process initiated in 1991 at the Madrid Conference had been compromised by the intransigence of the previous Israeli Government, which, notwithstanding condemnation by the international community, had persisted with its policy of illegal settlements, confiscation of lands and closure of Palestinian territories. The deplorable acts described in the report on the living conditions of the Palestinian people (E/1999/92) confirmed that that policy constituted a systematic violation of the economic and social rights of the Palestinians.

It was to be hoped that the new Israeli government would reactivate the peace process by putting an end to all the practices which constituted obstacles thereto, and first of all the creation of settlements in the occupied territories. As representatives of international legality the United Nations bodies should continue to press Israel to respect its commitments towards the Palestinian people and to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Egypt would continue to work with all the parties concerned to arrive at a just, fair and global peace in the Middle East. The Egyptian delegation noted with regret that the reports under consideration had not become available until the last minute and requested that the rules governing the publication of Council documents should be complied with.

Mr. QAZI (Pakistan) regretted that the failure to implement the agreements reached between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization was causing continuing hardship to the Palestinian and Arab populations in the occupied territories. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his note (A/54/152-E/1999/92), the policy of occupation and settlement pursued by the Israeli authorities was having harmful economic and social repercussions, which were aggravated by border closures and obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. He stressed the urgency of reversing that situation and welcomed

the stated intention of the new Israeli government to revive the process of peace in the Middle East; however, in the absence of implementation of the Wye River memorandum and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, that process would remain fragile and flawed. The sufferings of the Palestinian people could only be alleviated through the full realization of their economic and social rights.

Mr. PELEG (Observer for Israel) expressed regret that the statements made by the previous speakers contained no element of a nature to advance the peace process in the Middle East. Referring to the recent change of government in Israel, he emphasized that the reactivation of the peace process was a matter of priority for the new Prime Minister, Mr. Ehud Barak, and that he had already had consultations at the highest level, including talks with President Arafat, with a view to implementing the Wye River agreements. After paying tribute to the memory of King Hassan II, a professed champion of peace, he invited the members of the Council to support the efforts being made to revive the peace process by refraining from politicizing the discussions and by rejecting any proposal which prejudged the outcome of the negotiations on a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question.

Mr. WIRAJUDA (Indonesia) said that the results of the recent elections in Israel had awakened new hopes for the resumption of the peace process. However, one of the principal obstacles to securing lasting peace was still the issue of settlements. The continuance of the establishment of those illegal settlements was undermining the territorial integrity of Palestine and was liable to set at naught the recent efforts to establish confidence and justice.

Indonesia warmly welcomed the Wye River Memorandum as well as the avowed determination of the new Israeli Prime Minister rapidly to implement the peace agreements. The resumption of negotiations on the Golan issue would be a significant step forward in the peace process in the Middle East. However, the settlement of that problem should not be achieved at the expense of a comprehensive peace.

In the meantime, in view of the living conditions of the Palestinian peoples, it was essential that the bodies within the United Nations system, and in particular the Council, should continue to provide them with the assistance they needed to overcome their difficulties and to build a nation. To create conditions conducive to peace the international community as a whole should

promote development in the region by every possible means. Indonesia, for its part, reaffirmed its unswerving support for the action being taken by the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights.

The President stated that the Council had completed its consideration of items 9 and 11 on its agenda.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 50/227 AND 52/12B  
(A/54/115-E/1999/59, E/1999/56, E/1999/78, E/1999/101 and E/1999/108)

Mr. CIVILÍ (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-agency Affairs) introduced the report on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (E/1999/59), the progress report on collaboration between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions (E/1999/56) and the consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council in 1999 (E/1999/101). Those documents described the progress made in the implementation of reforms and pointed to areas in which further advances could be made.

The restructuring measures taken had led to a considerable improvement in the planning of the work of the Council and preparations for it. The high-level segment had been much better organized, since the theme had been determined sufficiently well in advance. However, the Council needed to make timely decisions on the programme of work of the Committee for Development Policy to enable the latter to make a substantive contribution to the Council's discussions. The weakest area was still the preparations for the general segment. Great efforts had been made to make the outcomes of the work of the Council more action-oriented. Follow-up to those outcomes, too, was more systematic, with the result that they were better reflected in inter-agency activities. The Council was paying much more attention to the coordination and harmonization of the work of its functional commissions. The latter had made efforts to rationalize their own methods of work, ensuring the continuity of their respective activities; that had resulted in a strengthening of the role of their bureaux. Links with the specialized agencies had been considerably strengthened; that was evidenced by the participation of senior officials of those agencies in some of the Council's discussions and by the joint preparation of some reports. The coordinating role of the Council had without question been strengthened thereby.

The brief report on cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions spoke of closer cooperation at all levels - a development which had already been highlighted in the joint exploratory review. The strengthening of dialogue and interaction was apparent at the intergovernmental level (joint meetings of high-level officials, consultations between permanent representatives at the United Nations and members of the executive boards of the IMF and the World Bank, preparations for the international meeting on the financing of development, etc.); at the secretariat level (with the active participation of the Bretton Woods institutions in the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)); and the country level during the establishment of joint country assessments and of United Nations development assistance framework documents.

The consolidated report on the work of the functional commissions described the degree of cooperation among them. The speaker highlighted the thematic linkages existing among the work programmes of the different commissions and stressed the need for them to draw more on each other's work. The report contained specific recommendations for enhancing complementarity and collaboration among the commissions on major intersectoral themes; it included a recommendation that the commissions should devote particular attention to the situation of the African countries and the least developed countries.

Mr. VALDIVIESO (Colombia) (Vice-President) introduced his report on the joint meetings held between the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council and the bureaux of its functional commissions (E/1999/108), in which he had served as Chairman. The report outlined the main issues discussed and the results of the discussions which took place during the joint meetings. It contained 10 recommendations, most of which had already been incorporated in the draft resolution on the subject which would be submitted to the Council. He confined himself to drawing the attention of the Council to four points which in his view were of particular interest. Firstly, the Bureau should continue to play an essential role in promoting coordination between the Council and its functional commissions and among the commissions themselves. Secondly, the functional commissions needed to have clear operational guidelines on how to apply the recommendations of the Council. Thirdly, the commissions should regularly hold joint meetings to improve their cooperation on issues of common interest, where necessary using electronic transmission techniques. Fourthly, it was important to ensure continuity of the work of the functional commissions;

each commission should therefore adopt a biennial thematic programme and consider re-electing one member of the outgoing bureau to the incoming bureau, without prejudice to the rules of procedure of the Council regarding the election of the Bureau. Finally, he said that institutional coordinating mechanisms must be designed which would permit a real strengthening of the feeling of usefulness of all the subsidiary bodies of the Council; which the latter should be able to have available to it a nucleus of specialist officials with the ability to monitor the implementation of its directives on a continuing basis.

Mr. TALBOT (Observer for Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the primary objective of the reform - the reaffirmation of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in the economic and social and related fields in accordance with the Charter - must be constantly kept in mind. That objective presupposed not only internal restructuring but also the reaffirmation by all member States of their will to see the organization play a greater role in those fields. The first task was that of strengthening the action of the United Nations system in the area of development, and more particularly to improve the effectiveness of its operational activities. The Group of 77 and China made a renewed appeal for the the funding of those activities to be placed on a predictable, continuous and assured basis. The second task was to strengthen and deepen cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions at all levels to make the multilateral system as a whole better able to meet the requirements of development. The financing of development offered particular promise as a field for cooperation, and the Group of 77 suggested that a joint task force on the subject should be set up with the objective of securing the active participation of the Bretton Woods institutions in the preparation, proceedings and follow-up of the international meeting on the financing of development. That task force should be set up as soon as possible during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly to enable it to submit recommendations to the preparatory committee for the meeting. Its members should be of a high level; the actual membership would be determined by consultations between the two parties. The Group of 77 was willing to discuss that proposal in the context of the consultations relating to the preparation of the draft resolution on item 8.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄINEN ( Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the countries of the European Union and the countries associated with the Union, together with Cyprus, Malta, the EFTA countries which are members of the



European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the reforms as reflected in the reports submitted under items 6 and 8 of the agenda and reiterated the need for a renewed effort at reform in the year 2001. In the meantime, every effort should be made to complete the process of review of the activities undertaken as soon as possible. The report on the functional committees of the Council was a useful one and contained a number of interesting recommendations. The establishment of multi-year funding frameworks by the United Nations funds and programmes was encouraging, and the European Union expressed the desire that the Council should in the year 2000 be provided with a report on those funding arrangements with a view to considering the future of the pledging conference. Joint meetings of executive boards should lead to concrete recommendations on issues of common interest. The rationalization and harmonization of programming procedures should be given a high priority, especially at field level.

The European Union welcomed the World Bank's initiative on the establishment of principles and practices in the social field and supported the view of the Development Committee that further development of those principles should take place within the framework of the United Nations. It welcomed the holding of the second special meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and encouraged the further development of that dialogue. Finally, it stressed the importance of enhanced coordination in the field between the United Nations and those institutions, working in close cooperation with national authorities.

Ms. POULTON (United States of America) noted with satisfaction that substantial progress had been made in recent years to strengthen the coordinating and supervisory role of the Council and to improve cooperation between it and the executive bodies of the funds and programmes, the regional economic commissions and a number of functional commissions. Relations between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions had strengthened considerably; those contacts should continue. That being said, still more work needed to be done. In particular, the Council should continue to strengthen its cooperation with the specialized agencies and with the expert committees and bodies under it, the competence of which was frequently under-utilized. It would be interesting to receive the suggestions of the bodies concerned on the subject.

Mrs. KHARASHUN (Belarus) observed that fundamental changes had taken place in the course of a single year in implementation of the resolutions

adopted by the General Assembly and the Council, but stated that work must continue on the outstanding issues in the economic and social and related fields; in particular, cooperation and coordination should be strengthened still further. The joint meetings between the bureau of the Council and the bureaux of the functional commissions should continue, and the dialogue with subsidiary and related bodies and the executive bodies concerned should be expanded. The idea of inviting experts to take part in consultations with the commissions deserved study; the individuals concerned should be competent national experts and officials and representatives of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned. Belarus favoured a constructive contribution from NGOs and expressed the hope that the modalities of their participation would be better defined. The improvement of the procedures and working methods of the functional commissions was a long-term task which should be pursued.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions could and should be strengthened still further to increase the effectiveness of the international financing system in the interest of all States and to establish market regulation machinery which would permit the management of crises. It would be desirable for the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions to meet to examine the question of regional development support strategies. The constructive contribution of the United Nations ad hoc Working Group on Financing for Development to the multilateral negotiation process deserved special mention. Finally, it might be useful to undertake a comparative study of the United Nations development assistance frameworks and the comprehensive development framework of the World Bank.

Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank) said that the relationship between the Bank and the United Nations covered every stage in decision-making and every sector of the economy. It had moved forward from what had initially been a simple exchange of information to a substantive dialogue on development issues. However, the two partners must remain vigilant and and refrain from all complacency. They needed to strengthen communications, in particular in order to coordinate aid at country level and to improve the transition from humanitarian aid to economic reconstruction. The two governing bodies also needed to develop in-depth dialogue based on a formal agenda and on procedures designed to strengthen the specific identity, role and functions of each. However, nothing could replace dialogue among the representatives of key ministries representing the countries in the two institutions.

In practice the fields of interaction between the World Bank and the different United Nations bodies were governance, the harmonization of statistics and indicators, rationalization of the Resident Coordinator system, the establishment of labour standards and the study of questions relating to human rights, and particularly the right to development. The implementation of projects in all those fields required the institutions to share common values and principles in the field of cooperation for development. In particular, primary emphasis must be laid on cost-effectiveness and concrete results on the ground, the comparative advantages of the different partners must be exploited and the modes of cooperation must be defined in the light of the realities of the coming millennium. It must also be accepted that the diversity of the United Nations system was essential for the achievement of the development objectives of individual countries and for respect of the different approaches and standards on which there was global consensus. Finally, cooperation must be based on mutual trust, and the human factor should occupy a central position in the concerns of the partners.

Mr. LIU Jingtao (China) said that some of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the restructuring and revitalization of United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (A/54/115-E/1999/59), although praiseworthy, could only be implemented at a later stage when conditions were favourable. That was particularly true of recommendations (ii), (viii) and (ix). The reform of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council should be a step-by-step process in which the results of the reforms introduced must be evaluated and lessons drawn from the experience thus acquired before any new measures were adopted. The strengthening of cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions was to be welcomed; but much remained to be done in the fields of financing of development, poverty alleviate and the reform of international financial structures.

Ms. UJEVI (Observer for Croatia) attached great importance to the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, which should form part of the overall reform designed to enable the United Nations better to respond to the needs of its members. Croatia unreservedly supported the efforts being made to rationalize the work of the Council and its functional commissions, to improve relations between the Council and the specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the

United Nations, to harmonize the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions, to simplify documentation and, in general, to avoid all duplication. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should continue, particularly as a substantive dialogue between the partners could help to find responses to the problems created by globalization. In conclusion, he said that the Council had an important place within the United Nations system and that for that reason its role should be strengthened in the interests of Member States.

Mr. WIRAJUDA (Indonesia) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/115-E/1999/59): the implementation of its recommendations would enable the Council to improve the working of its functional commissions and prevent overlapping. With the same end in view it would be desirable for the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its next substantive session a progress report on the implementation of the provisions of its resolution 1998/46 concerning the adoption of multi-year programmes of work and the coordinated follow-up to United Nations major conferences and summits. The Council itself should organize an informal discussion on intersectoral themes cutting across several functional commissions with the widest possible participation from experts, NGOs and the Council's subsidiary bodies. Finally, meetings between the Economic and Social Council and international financial and trade institutions should be encouraged, since they permitted the study of questions of common interest within the framework of the forthcoming round of negotiations for trade liberalization.

Mr. NEBENZYA (Russian Federation) expressed satisfaction at the relevance of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/115-E/1999/59), particularly those relating to the improvement of the working of the functional commissions of the Council. However, further thought was needed on the subject of the participation of non-governmental organizations in all the meetings of the Council and of its functional commissions. The participation of representatives of civil society in the work of United Nations bodies should not detract from the intergovernmental character of those bodies. As regards cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, a greater participation by high officials in those institutions in the substantive dialogue taking place both in the General Assembly and during the proceedings of the Council and its functional commissions could only be welcomed. That mutually beneficial dialogue should be continued with a view to developing a common approach on

issues such as the financing of development, combating the effects of globalization, the coordination of operational activities and the redesign of international financial structures.

The PRESIDENT stated that the Council had completed its consideration of item 8 on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.