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

Agenda item 56: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/77/90-E/2022/66)

1. **Mr. Alami** (Director, Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), introducing the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/77/90-E/2022/66), said that Israeli policies and practices continued to raise concerns about adherence to international law and had severe repercussions for Palestinians' living conditions.

2. During the reporting period, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, Israel had intensified its repression against Palestinians who had expressed dissent and had targeted human rights organizations that had documented or sought accountability for violations of international law or had accused Israel of apartheid. Israel had also escalated its excessive use of force against Palestinians, which amounted to arbitrary deprivation of life. The eruption of tension in April and May 2021 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the military escalation in Gaza had resulted in civilian deaths and injuries and in damage and destruction affecting civilian infrastructure. In the West Bank, Israeli security and military forces had failed to protect Palestinians amid the highest level of civil violence since 2017 or to hold the perpetrators accountable, appearing instead to be complicit in many of the attacks. Israel had continued to arrest, detain and incarcerate thousands of people, with hundreds currently being held indefinitely in administrative detention, without charge or trial; cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees had also been documented. Israeli policies and practices in Area C and East Jerusalem had created a coercive environment that had forced Palestinians to leave their homes and could amount to forcible transfer; Palestinian homes and other structures funded by donors had also been demolished. The punitive demolition by Israel of the homes of families and neighbours of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks amounted to collective punishment, which was prohibited by international humanitarian law. In Gaza, approximately 16,250 housing and commercial units had been damaged during the escalation of hostilities in May 2021, aggravating the housing shortage.

3. The complex system of restrictions on Palestinians' movements had effectively disconnected Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, disrupting daily life. The 15-year-long blockade on Gaza amounted to collective punishment for 2.1 million Palestinians, severely affecting their living conditions and impeding development and reconstruction. Israel continued to deny Palestinians access to their own natural resources, controlling shared water sources in the West Bank and depleting or contaminating the main water source in Gaza. Israel prevented Palestinians from using over two thirds of agricultural resources in the West Bank and 35 per cent of farmland in Gaza. It also continued to exploit \$30 billion in mineral reserves in the West Bank and had not issued permits to Palestinian companies since 1994. Israel severely limited Palestinian access to an estimated 1.5 billion barrels of oil reserves in the West Bank and more than \$2.5 billion worth of natural gas off the Gaza coast. It had systematically stripped the Palestinian economy of elements that were vital for its healthy operation; the productive base continued to shrink, exacerbating dire living conditions.

4. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, declining funding and the escalation of hostilities in May 2021 had made the situation worse. It had been estimated that in 2022 approximately 2.1 million Palestinians would need humanitarian assistance. The number of food-insecure Palestinians had increased from 1.7 million in 2018 to 2 million in early 2021. Unemployment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was at 26 per cent, and hyperunemployment at 47 per cent. The Palestinian health-care system was fragile, disconnected and undergoing de-development, and lacked human, financial and material resources, and the health infrastructure in Gaza had also been debilitated by the blockade and military escalation. Impacts on education and water, sanitation and hygiene services, especially for women and girls, were also highlighted in the report. Syrians in the Golan suffered from discriminatory policies designed to benefit Israeli settlers, in particular with regard to land and water allocation and planning and zoning policies, resulting in harsh economic and social conditions for Syrians that were expected to worsen. Many Israeli policies ran contrary to international law – some were discriminatory while others might amount to forcible transfer and collective punishment – and had led to de-development, especially in Gaza, and had fragmented the Palestinian economy, rendering it dependent on Israel and foreign aid. Adherence to international law was therefore imperative in order to ensure that no party enjoyed impunity and to secure justice and peace for all living in region.

5. **Ms. Nasser-Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the illegal occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israel continued to violate all principles of international law and to intentionally displace Palestinians, dispossess them of their homes, confiscate their land and resources, obstruct their independence and development and undermine their economy with illegal colonial practices and apartheid policies. The agricultural sector, an integral driver of the economy and one of the basic pillars of food security, had continuously and deliberately been targeted by Israel at the hands of occupying forces and terrorist settlers, who were killing and terrorising people in broad daylight, stealing their land and natural resources, burning and demolishing their homes and productive assets, razing their agricultural lands and uprooting their fruit-bearing trees, including the centuries-old olive trees that were a cornerstone of the Palestinian economy. In addition, Israel continued to exploit over 90 per cent of transboundary water resources exclusively for Israeli use and to allocate less than 10 per cent for Palestinian use, despite most of the areas where aquifer basins were fed lying within the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a result, each Palestinian received on average less than 73 litres per capita per day for domestic purposes, compared with 300 litres for an average Israeli. Palestinians were thus surviving on less than the minimum requirement of 100 litres per capita per day recommended by the World Health Organization.

6. Israeli-imposed restrictions, the expansion of illegal settlements and other practices not only prevented development but had also caused a humanitarian crisis, and the prospects for the Palestinian economy would continue to be negative if the current situation persisted. It was therefore imperative that the illegal Israeli occupation be brought to an end in order to stop the suffering of the Palestinian people, enable Palestine to pursue genuine development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure viable economic and social conditions for the Palestinian people, which could not be achieved under occupation. The international community must uphold its legal obligations, since only collective action, with concrete measures of accountability, could end the illegal Israeli colonial occupation and apartheid regime and enable the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights, including the right to sustainable development.

7. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan

had the unwavering and unequivocal support of the Group in their economic development efforts and aspirations. The Group was deeply concerned about the further decline in social and economic conditions for the Palestinian people as a result of illegal Israeli practices, including the continued colonization of land in grave breach of international humanitarian law, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The confiscation by Israel of Palestinian property, the construction and expansion of settlements and of the wall, the demolition of Palestinian homes and the mass dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians must be halted. Palestinian people continued to face severe restrictions on planning, building and access to natural resources in Area C, which constituted more than 60 per cent of the occupied West Bank and was the richest in terms of natural resources. Any investment or economic activity there required permits to be issued by the occupying Power, but it was nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain them: 99 per cent of their applications for permits to build and develop communities on their own land had been rejected.

8. In Gaza, the illegal Israeli blockade and repeated military aggression had made development goals even more elusive, limiting access for Palestinians to materials and technologies that could promote the efficient use of energy, water or other natural resources. The Group therefore reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan to their natural resources, and demanded that Israel cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of such resources in clear violation of international law, which undermined the ability of those in occupied areas to pursue sustainable development. Furthermore, the international community must shoulder its responsibility to provide protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, and exert pressure on Israel to cease its repeated attacks on innocent civilians and infrastructure. Multilateral efforts were urgently needed to advance the political process and preserve the prospect of achieving a just and lasting solution for Palestinians on the basis of a two-State solution, within pre-1967 borders.

9. **Mr. Al-shaikhli** (Iraq), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the negative impacts of the occupation had been amply documented in the report prepared by ESCWA ([A/77/90-E/2022/66](#)). The various ways in which the occupation distorted the Palestinian economy had been further elucidated in latest report on

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) assistance to the Palestinian people: developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (TD/B/EX(72)/2). Israeli practices monopolized and endangered Palestinian resources, particularly in Area C, where discriminatory policies allowed settlers unfair access to land and resources. Oil and gas reserves beneath the West Bank and off the coast of Gaza, and even mineral resources in the Dead Sea adjacent to the West Bank, were being exploited by Israel and denied to Palestinians.

10. In Gaza, more than 15 years of siege and repeated military incursions had forced over 2 million people to live in the biggest open-air prison in history, with a stagnant economy, rampant unemployment and 60 per cent of residents living below the poverty line. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the challenges already posed to education by the occupation. Children had to travel long distances to reach the nearest school, often on foot, through checkpoints and enduring harassment by settlers. Palestinian farmers were deprived of fair access to the best arable land, adequate water to farm it with, and other production inputs that were essential for agriculture. All those violations of international law, international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention were made possible by the impunity enjoyed by Israel. The Group renewed its call on the international community to take effective measures to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its actions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

11. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia), speaking also on behalf of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in their capacity as the States members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, said that sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan was intimately connected with peace, security and justice. The occupation must be brought to an end and a comprehensive and durable solution found to the Palestinian issue. The Arab inhabitants were being deprived of their rights to development and self-determination. In the midst of geopolitical tensions and other global challenges, the Israeli occupation was affecting all aspects of economic and social life.

12. International law and the Charter of the United Nations called for equality of rights among peoples. The international community needed to take the measures necessary to protect the rights of Palestinians, including their right to development. The Israeli authorities needed to comply with international resolutions calling

for an end to the occupation and a full withdrawal from all occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.

13. The States members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf reaffirmed their support for the Palestinian cause and the need for a speedy resolution that guaranteed Palestinians the right of return, sovereignty over their natural resources, and an independent State in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. They also urged the States Members of the United Nations to continue to provide support for the Palestinian people through contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

14. **Mr. Al-thani** (Qatar) said that the ESCWA report had catalogued the suffering of Palestinians and Syrians under occupation. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to exploit natural resources in the areas it occupied, in addition to destroying homes, displacing residents, damaging agricultural land and uprooting fruit trees. That was inconsistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 17 (2) of which provided that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property”. United Nations resolutions had reaffirmed the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources and had called for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan.

15. Education, which was so important to sustainable development, had been interrupted by damage to education facilities in Gaza, the closure of schools and concern for children’s security. His country had stepped up its support for education programmes and other services administered by UNRWA. Over the previous decade, the Qatar Fund for Development had contributed \$1.5 billion to reconstruction in Gaza. Qatar would continue to support all efforts for security, stability and peace in the region.

16. **Mr. Mabongo** (South Africa) said that the protracted occupation of Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan by Israel had had a detrimental effect on the lives of Palestinian and Syrian people and on the social and economic development of the occupied territories and would jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the 15 years since Israel had closed the Gaza Strip, more than 2 million residents had been deprived of opportunities to improve their lives. In addition, the lack of control over natural

resources to address dire water and energy needs and other reconstruction efforts had impeded the recovery of Palestine from the COVID-19 pandemic.

17. His Government remained committed to supporting initiatives aimed at refocusing the international agenda on Palestine and the Middle East peace process, especially amid heightened geopolitical tensions. There would be no peace or justice for the Palestinian people without upholding their inalienable right to self-determination. The international community had failed to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolutions adopted since 1948, and no concrete action had been taken to address blatant violations. Since 1967, Israel had constructed over 160 settlements and outposts on land seized from the Palestinian people, on which more than 600,000 Israelis were living, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and in disregard of the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. South Africa continued to support the two-State solution and international efforts aimed at establishing an independent, fully sovereign and viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders. Support for UNRWA must also be increased, especially during difficult times. Concrete action must be taken by the United Nations to support Palestine and resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, including by putting pressure on Israel as the occupying Power.

18. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that the prospect of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 was especially dire for the Palestinian people. His country was deeply worried about developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that were reflective of apartheid practices and by the seeming disregard within the international community for increasing violence against the Palestinians. The expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, land seizures, restrictions on the movement of people and commodities and other factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic had been significant barriers to the social and economic development of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, with impunity, in contravention of international law and United Nations resolutions, was a fundamental cause of ongoing tension, instability and violence in the region and undermined the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

19. In particular, his delegation was deeply troubled by the continued use of force and the exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Unbalanced practices and policies harmed the future of occupied populations and disproportionately affected women, girls and young

people, leading to their further impoverishment. The Government of Israel must therefore immediately cease unlawful restrictions and actions. His delegation urged the international community to collectively denounce Israeli acts with real action, not simply by expressing concern or empathy. Israel must stop the destruction of Palestinian houses and property and comply with Security Council resolutions. Only the creation of two States, upholding the legal rights of the Palestinian people and preserving the unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, could bring about comprehensive peace in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions, as well as with trade conventions between Israel and Palestine. The international consensus must be strengthened to support the views that Palestine should realize its full economic potential, the illegal Israeli occupation must end and Palestine should be a full member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

20. **Mr. Al Nahhas** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the policies of the Israeli occupation systematically impeded social and economic development. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to flout Security Council resolutions and international human rights law, including by discriminating against Syrian citizens who refused Israeli citizenship. Israel was trying to increase the settler population in the occupied Syrian Golan with incentives that included granting tracts of land for housing and commercial agricultural development and offering financial incentives in excess of \$10,000. The occupation authorities were planning to add 7,000 residential units to the Katsrin settlement by 2026 and implement various commercial, industrial, energy and tourism projects on occupied Syrian land.

21. Israel, the occupying Power, was committing numerous violations of Security Council resolution [497 \(1981\)](#), international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. It was building settlements and expanding commercial activity in the occupied Syrian Golan at the expense of the inhabitants' agricultural livelihoods and also their health. Israel was happy to impose its tax laws on Syrian farmers, but when it came to health care for work injuries, Israel denied those same farmers free hospitalization on the grounds that they were not covered by the compensation law. Israel had built 45 wind turbines on 6,000 ha of land appropriated from Syrian farmers. It had buried some 1,500 barrels of radioactive waste at some 20 sites across the occupied Syrian Golan, where cancer was on the rise. For the sake of economic development and the health of the inhabitants, United Nations resolutions calling for an end to the occupation should be implemented immediately.

22. **Mr. Ahmed** (Bangladesh) said that, whereas the right to development for all was at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, half a century of occupation and appropriation of Palestinian land and resources by Israel had impoverished the Palestinian people and denied them the right to development. Persistent Israeli practices and policies, often in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, had affected socioeconomic conditions in Palestine and caused enduring harm for the development and welfare of its people. Although the General Assembly had, in several resolutions, demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, those demands had not been met, and the blockade of Gaza had continued, along with the killing of and senseless hostilities against the Palestinian people. Poverty, unemployment and food insecurity were rising in Palestine, with the World Food Programme estimating that poverty and food insecurity affected 53 per cent and 64.4 per cent, respectively, of the Palestinian population. The socioeconomic fabric of Gaza was faltering owing to the cumulative impact of the 15-year-long sea, land and air blockade and restricted trade and access to resources, coupled with high unemployment and poverty rates. Movement restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic had further increased vulnerabilities.

23. His delegation suggested ways to ameliorate the dire situation. First, ending the occupation by Israel, and its systematic and widespread violations of international law, would enable Palestine to meet its sustainable development commitments. Second, the international community had a responsibility to ensure that the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan benefited from their natural resources, of which they had long been deprived, and claimed restitution for the harm already caused by the occupying Power. Third, cash transfers, food aid and project grants for poverty alleviation, education, women's empowerment and health care must be scaled up, and support was needed for technical and capacity development and institution-building to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in a context of dwindling finances and a sharp decline in foreign aid. The World Bank had estimated that the Palestinian economy lost nearly 3.4 billion in potential revenue each year owing to Israeli restrictions. His country would remain steadfast in its support for the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent, viable, contiguous and

sovereign Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of a two-State solution.

24. **Mr. Hamadah** (Kuwait) said that the ESCWA report provided an impartial accounting of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power. Discriminatory Israeli policies and practices were obstructing development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, including by depleting natural resources, expanding settlement activity, appropriating land and damaging infrastructure. As the ESCWA report noted, the Secretary-General continued to reaffirm the validity of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council decided that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights was null and void and without international legal effect. However, despite numerous United Nations resolutions on the Palestinian issue, no progress had been made in 70 years. Israeli policy was altering demographic makeup through forced evictions, land seizures and settlement expansion. Kuwait condemned those Israeli practices, supported all efforts to restore all legitimate rights of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples, and called on the international community to do the same.

25. **Mr. Pedroso Cuesta** (Cuba) said that the restrictions imposed since 1967 on Palestinian economic activity, resources and land had deprived the Palestinian people of vital elements for development, making the economy more vulnerable to internal and external shocks. The persistence of Israeli policies and practices that violated international law had serious humanitarian and socioeconomic repercussions for the populations of Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan, including on their rights to development and to full sovereignty over their natural resources. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the unemployment rate had continued to rise since 2016, reaching 26 per cent in 2021. The World Health Organization had recorded 233 attacks against the sanitation sector in 2021, putting the health of over 1.35 million Palestinians at risk. It had been estimated that in 2022 some 600,000 Palestinians would lose access to education and require humanitarian aid. According to current socioeconomic trends, it would be difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without radically altering conditions.

26. His country condemned the continued military occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel, illegal policies and colonizing practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan, human rights violations and systematic war crimes that caused significant suffering. The system

of oppression, exploitation, appropriation of resources and denial of the rights of the population of Palestine constituted a genuine system of apartheid. Cuba supported demands by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to recover the Golan Heights, seized by Israel in 1967, and reiterated calls for the full and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories. Cuba also called for Israel to immediately end its occupation of Palestinian territories and its aggressive policies and colonizing practices, as well as for it to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions. His country condemned the unilateral decisions of the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in disregard of its historic status and to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan, which were serious violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and Security Council resolutions.

27. **Mr. Al Hammaddi** (United Arab Emirates) said that between 2016 and 2022, his country had provided over \$684 million in aid to the Palestinian people. It had also contributed over \$165 million to UNRWA, including \$143 million for education and \$11.7 million to provide aid, social services and essential commodities in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The United Arab Emirates had just contributed \$25 million to Al Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem. It had also airlifted over 1,800 tons of food and medical supplies to Palestine, donated 1.4 million vaccine doses and set up a field hospital in Gaza to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

28. He called on the international community to support measures that prevented escalation and advanced negotiation. The only solution was the two-State solution, with a sovereign and independent State of Palestine with the 1967 border and East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. The United Arab Emirates welcomed what the Prime Minister of Israel had said in his 22 September 2022 address to the General Assembly but cautioned that words needed to be translated into actions. The legal status of East Jerusalem should remain unaltered, Palestinians should be enabled to practice their religious rites and the historic role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as the guardian of Jerusalem's holy places should be respected. The United Arab Emirates would continue to work with regional and international partners to create conditions for the Palestinian people to live a decent life in an independent State with a peaceful, prosperous and tolerant society side by side with the Israeli people.

29. **Mr. Al-shaikhli** (Iraq) said that the ESCWA report showed how Israeli practices such as settlement expansion, home demolition, arbitrary arrest and restrictions on freedom of movement impeded economic and social development. Israeli policies in Jerusalem violated United Nations resolutions, international law and human rights. The occupation forces used excessive force and imposed racist and discriminatory policies throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

30. Under international laws and norms, the Palestinian people had a right to sovereignty over their natural resources, including water, and the right to compensation for depletion and endangerment of those resources by the occupying Power, which was putting the Sustainable Development Goals completely out of reach for Palestinians. His country valued efforts by international and regional organizations to alleviate the suffering of inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and looked forward to the day when Palestinians could exercise all their rights in an independent State. A fair and just settlement of the Palestinian issue in accordance with the relevant international resolutions would be conducive to stability, prosperity and greater economic integration throughout the entire Middle East region.

31. **Ms. Rasheed** (Maldives) said that the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan continued to suffer from policies and practices that were in blatant violation of Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including settlement expansion, the demolition of homes and other structures, access and movement restrictions and the disproportionate use of force. Since 1967, those restrictions had made the occupied peoples vulnerable to internal and external shocks, as had been apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had led to the diversion of scarce national and international resources intended for long-term humanitarian and development assistance towards immediate relief, further aggravating the socioeconomic situation. Women and girls had been suffering disproportionately. During the escalation of hostilities in May 2021, which had resulted in extensive civilian deaths, injuries and large-scale damage to civilian infrastructure, shelters had not been equipped to address the needs of displaced women and girls, who faced a rise in gender-based violence. In addition, in the Syrian Golan, land and natural resources were being confiscated and discriminatory practices relating to water and land were prevalent, jeopardizing the health, environment and agriculture of Syrian citizens.

32. In spite of the commitments made by Member States in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, the current trajectory of the Palestinian people and of Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan was one of being left behind. Without sovereignty over their natural resources and land, they would not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Maldives supported their right to self-determination and strongly condemned violence and oppression in the occupied areas in full disregard of international human rights law. The international community must commit itself to finding a two-State solution and must be responsible for ensuring that the people of Israel and Palestine live side-by-side in peace and security, within recognized borders.

33. **Mr. Varganov** (Russian Federation) said that the stalled Middle East peace process, with the Palestinian question at its core, remained a source of ongoing tension in the Middle East and North Africa region. Russia continued to support a fair resolution of the Palestinian question on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, which provided for the creation of an independent, sovereign, territorially contiguous Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

34. However, dangerous trends had recently been seen aimed at expanding unilateral measures and aggressively revising formerly settled arrangements, including the decision of the United States on Jerusalem and its illegitimate recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, which constituted a flagrant violation of international law. In that context, his delegation wished to reiterate that the Golan was unquestionably Syrian territory. It was particularly concerned by the creation of irreversible facts on the ground by Israel as a result of the increase in illegal settlement construction, the forced eviction of Palestinians, the destruction of homes and the confiscation of property, including agricultural land. A high level of violence persisted not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank owing to arbitrary and disproportionate Israeli military actions and operations.

35. It was of the utmost importance to provide support to UNRWA, whose humanitarian and political dimensions had an important stabilizing effect on the Palestinian territories and the countries of the Middle East. In that connection, attempts to discredit UNRWA and deprive it of its funding were short-sighted. It was naïve and dangerous to hope that the problem of Palestinian refugees would disappear with the disappearance of that Agency. Attempts, first and foremost by Western countries, to replace the political

process with an economic peace and to promote Arab-Israeli peace without resolving the Palestinian question were also counterproductive.

36. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia) said that Israeli policies and practices, together with the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn, had worsened the socioeconomic condition of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Syrian people in the occupied Syrian Golan and had seriously undermined their ability to pursue sustainable development, rendering the economy dependent on the occupying Power and foreign aid. His country reaffirmed its commitment to provide support and capacity-building for Palestine. In the past 16 years, Indonesia had provided more than 180 training sessions on business, finance, agriculture, health, women's empowerment, democratization, good governance and mitigating the impact of the pandemic, which had been attended by over 2,000 participants, and stood ready to further enhance development cooperation with Palestine through bilateral, South-South and multilateral efforts. The international community must continue to provide protection, support and assistance for people in the occupied territories, including through United Nations entities.

37. Economic programmes and assistance would, however, be pointless without true freedom to exercise the basic right to manage natural resources, and Israel must therefore end its illegal policies and practices that threatened the daily lives of Palestinians and Syrians in the occupied territories. His country called for the early resumption of credible multilateral negotiations in order to reach a lasting peace for Palestine, based on a two-State solution, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with internationally agreed parameters and United Nations resolutions.

38. **Mr. Abdelaal** (Egypt) said that recent escalation in Gaza had brought about further destruction of infrastructure, homes and civilian facilities. The West Bank had seen increases in home demolitions, land confiscation and settler violence, all of which was undermining the two-State solution, even as Israeli exploitation of natural resources was preventing Palestinians from improving their living conditions. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the Israeli authorities continued to expand settlements and alter demography. Year after year, the Committee was presented with reports from ESCWA, UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme documenting the deteriorating situation. Israeli practices were at odds with international law and United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), and with international instruments, including the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

39. Conditions would not improve until Palestinians had their rights restored, including their right to sovereignty over their natural resources. In particular they should have access to all their resources in Area C and no longer be dependent on the Israeli economy. Israel must honour signed agreements, in particular with regard to tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority. Egypt would continue its efforts to maintain the ceasefire in Gaza and urged donor States to continue to provide support for the Palestinian people. The only way to achieve stability and security in the Middle East was through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, United Nations resolutions and the two-State solution.

40. **Ms. Marin Sevilla** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it was of deep concern that, even after more than 60 years of conflict, Israel continued to use cruel and inhumane practices against the Palestinian people, amounting to forced displacement, apartheid, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention (including of children), torture, demolition of homes and commercial structures, illegal settlement and restrictions on the movement of people, goods and services and on access to religious sites. Such practices constituted a war crime against innocent people and were contrary to international law and United Nations resolutions. The occupation was the main obstacle to development in Palestine and was aimed at controlling economic activities and depleting natural resources, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult for Palestinians to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and enjoy the full range of human rights, including social, economic and cultural rights. Water, mineral resources and energy were all under strict Israeli control.

41. Her country called for an end to commercial relations with the businesses of settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan. In the Syrian Golan, the occupying Power had expanded illegal settlements, exploited natural resources and conducted discriminatory practices with regard to construction, access to water and the sale of products in Syrian territory. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela firmly rejected all Israeli practices and reaffirmed the sovereignty of the Palestinian and Syrian people in the occupied territories over their natural resources.

42. **Mr. Abd Aziz** (Malaysia) said that the Palestinian and Syrian populations in occupied areas continued to

suffer from the detrimental consequences of systematic oppression as a result of discriminatory policies, the denial of basic human rights, the imposition of harsh living conditions, inhumane acts and the confiscation of land and property, which were tantamount to the crime of apartheid and clearly inconsistent with the pursuit of peace and peaceful coexistence. Restricted access and movement, as well as closures imposed by the occupying forces, continued to disrupt daily life, with profound effects on the rights to work, an adequate standard of living, education and health, among others. The international community must not disregard the unlawful practices conducted by the occupying Power and illegal settlers against the fundamental rights of Palestinians. The international community must also call upon Israel to immediately end its occupation, cease apartheid practices and comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions. His delegation called for meaningful negotiations based on a two-State solution to be resumed. Efforts must be intensified to mobilize assistance for Palestinians and Syrians in occupied territories in order to make progress towards sustainable recovery. His delegation therefore called upon Member States to support and fund the critical work of UNRWA through generous contributions. For example, Malaysia had pledged \$5 million over five years to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for UNRWA, which was an instrumental partner in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

43. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to implement a multi-year plan to illegally develop and expand agriculture through unlawful land seizures. The continued imposition of discriminatory practices with regard to water also undermined agricultural activities for Syrian citizens in occupied areas, further aggravating their economic conditions. His delegation reiterated its long-standing position that the Golan Heights must be returned to the Syrian Arab Republic. His country would continue to play an active role in various regional and multilateral forums in order to pursue all relevant channels to find a just, sustainable, comprehensive and peaceful settlement for Palestinians and Syrians in the occupied territories. A deafening silence on systematic rights violations, including with regard to natural resources, would only encourage impunity on the part of Israel and double standards on the part of the international community.

44. **Mr. Al Zadjali** (Oman) said that his country supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people for an independent State in accordance with international law, the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. It shared the international community's concern about the exploitation by Israel, the occupying

Power, of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as its destruction and appropriation of agricultural land, orchards and water sources. A just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as a full and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Syria Golan. In the meantime, Israel must comply with the provisions of international law and the relevant international resolutions in territories that it occupied.

45. **Mr. Latrous** (Algeria) said that the ESCWA report left no doubt that the aggressive policies being pursued by Israel in defiance of the United Nations were exacerbating the economic difficulties being faced by the Palestinian people amid the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions and the global food and energy crises. The occupation was monopolizing resources and appropriating land in flagrant violation of the principle of the sovereignty of peoples over their resources. This deliberate impoverishment of the Palestinian people had been going on for years, with Palestinian exports and imports hampered by heavy taxation. Algeria called on the international community to take action to bring an end to the occupation and allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

46. **Mr. Hamed** (Libya) said that as security, humanitarian, social and economic conditions continued to deteriorate, Palestinians in the clutches of the Israeli occupation were losing confidence in the ability of the United Nations to help them regain their rights and bring about a just and lasting peace. The ESCWA report showed how the Israeli entity was persisting with settlement expansion, home demolition and the separation wall. Israeli restrictions were exacerbating unemployment, infrastructure collapse, energy shortages and food and water insufficiency in a Palestinian economy already feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, other global crises and geopolitical tensions. Despite numerous international resolutions and instruments affirming the right of Palestinians to establish an independent State in their homeland, the Israeli entity was not only persisting in its brutal occupation, but was even appropriating additional Palestinian land to settle Zionist Jews from all over the world. In Gaza, the brutal siege was continuing, and the basic needs of 2 million Gazans were being completely ignored. The current situation was completely at odds with the 2030 Agenda pledge to leave no one behind.

The meeting rose at 12 p.m.