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Chair: Mr. Sithole (Vice-Chair) (South Africa)
later: Mr. Al Hassan (Chair) (Oman)

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In the absence of Mr. Al Hassan (Oman), Mr. Sithole (South Africa), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 46: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (continued) (A/77/13, A/77/281, A/77/259 and A/77/314)

1. **Mr. Salah** (Tunisia) said that his delegation commended the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its commitment to maintaining vital services and humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees despite difficulties encountered in the field and funding cutbacks. The alarming deterioration of the Agency's financial situation was adversely affecting its activities, with potentially grave repercussions for regional stability.

2. Efforts must be made to address the Agency's periodic budgetary shortfall and ensure its long-term financial sustainability. His Government supported the efforts of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to expand the Agency's donor base and identify innovative means of funding. It welcomed the steps he was taking to ensure that UNRWA met the highest standards of transparency and effectiveness.

3. His delegation looked forward to the extension of the mandate of UNRWA, which would enable the Agency to perform its crucial role until a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine refugees was reached as part of final status negotiations. It reiterated its support for the just Palestinian cause and the restoration of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, foremost among them the establishment of an independent, sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

4. **Ms. Mrad** (Lebanon) said that the Agency's chronic financial shortfall jeopardized the provision of basic services to millions of Palestine refugees, potentially undermining the stability of host countries and directly endangering the livelihood and fundamental rights of Palestine refugees. Her delegation therefore welcomed the support of donor countries and called upon the international community to fulfil and increase financial pledges to the Agency's budget for 2022 and beyond in a sustainable and predictable manner. At the most recent meeting of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, held in Beirut on 14 and 15 June 2022, efforts to develop and sustain innovative funding methods had been discussed. The field visits conducted by meeting participants to several refugee camps in

Lebanon had underscored the urgent need to secure sufficient funding.

5. Efforts to address the financial crisis of UNRWA must not be allowed to undermine the Agency's mandate in any way. Her delegation looked forward to the extension of that mandate; it was vital for the international community to fulfil its political obligation to the Agency and confront the political attacks against it. In the interest of regional stability, all peace-loving countries should secure sustained, predictable funding for the Agency by making regular, multi-year contributions and supporting proposals to cover the operational costs of UNRWA from the Organization's regular budget.

6. Since 1949, the Agency had provided a social safety net for successive generations of Palestine refugees and helped to preserve the right of return, pending a political solution to the question of Palestine. Such a solution should bring about a just and comprehensive peace, the end of the occupation and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. It should include a solution to the question of Palestine refugees in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#), and the Arab Peace Initiative.

7. **Mr. Vichankaiyakij** (Thailand) said that the continued dedication of UNRWA in providing humanitarian assistance to and improving the livelihood of more than 5 million Palestine refugees was commendable, as was the generosity of host countries in the region. His delegation continued to support a mutually agreed, peaceful solution on the basis of the two-State solution, with a view to achieving a lasting peace in the region and thereby addressing the plight of Palestine refugees. Pending such a solution, the Agency's mandate would remain vital and should be renewed until 2026. His delegation was concerned about the adverse effect of shifting geopolitical priorities on the financial challenges faced by UNRWA. A voluntary contributor to UNRWA since 1978, Thailand had recently renewed its multi-year pledge for 2022–2026 in the amount of \$200,000, in the hope that its modest contribution would help the Agency continue its work without disruption.

8. His delegation commended the Agency's efforts to broaden and diversify its donor base, including through cooperation with the private sector. Such avenues should be explored further to secure adequate, timely and predictable funding for the Agency. Thailand welcomed the ongoing reforms within UNRWA and would continue to support the human development and

security of Palestinians, notably by continuing to hold annual international training courses on a variety of issues, such as public health and sustainable agriculture.

9. **Ms. Kuzee** (Namibia) said that the Agency's work must be supported. It was essential to take into account the human rights of the disenfranchised people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee crisis created by the continued denial of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to occupy their rightful place in their homeland. While UNRWA made an effort to stretch the contributions it received, more support was clearly needed in order to provide for a full spectrum of services such as education, and health care, including maternal and childcare and mental health and psychosocial support.

10. UNRWA remained integral to the achievement of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine; without the Agency's support, the already fragile and volatile situation would have deteriorated further. More predictable funding should therefore be extended to UNRWA through the regular budget of the United Nations as well as through assessed contributions.

11. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh) said that despite repeated international calls, Israel had persisted in its illegal occupation, including the construction of illegal settlements and eviction of Palestinians. Home demolitions, torture, disruption of health access, attacks on schools, the killing of civilians and other grave violations of human rights continued unabated. The international community must respond to the appalling humanitarian and human-rights situation in Palestine in order to ensure the provision of critical humanitarian assistance and services.

12. Through its health, education, relief and social services, UNRWA extended a lifeline and a source of hope to Palestine refugees; but it faced numerous challenges, including a financial deficit, extremely volatile situations, and restrictions on its operations. Those challenges must be addressed in order to maintain regional stability. For its part, Bangladesh continued to make voluntary contributions to UNRWA. His delegation commended the commitment of the Commissioner-General to transforming the Agency and welcomed the progress that had been made. During the reporting period, the volume of services provided by the Agency in the areas of health, education, social services and support for entrepreneurs was encouraging, as were the innovative measures being taken to ensure transparency, efficiency and accountability within the Agency. UNRWA must be given the necessary support

to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals were realized in Palestine.

13. The continuous occupation of and blockade on Gaza had caused humanitarian catastrophe by restricting economic activity and hindering the Agency's delivery of essential services. In addition, Israeli authorities continued to restrict the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. His delegation condemned such practices and called for their immediate end.

14. The escalating threats and attacks on UNRWA staff were deeply alarming. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice in order to enable the Agency to fulfil its mandate effectively.

15. His delegation was disappointed at the adoption of a zero-growth programme budget for the third consecutive year and the end-of-year shortfall of more than \$100 million in 2022. It encouraged Member States to consider increasing the support provided to UNRWA from the United Nations regular budget and to make additional voluntary contributions. Assessed contributions should also be increased in order to ensure more predictable multi-year funding for the Agency. Lastly, it was imperative to end the illegal Israeli occupation by achieving the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

16. **Mr. Al-barati** (Yemen) said that the Agency's mandate must be renewed and could not be undermined or transferred to another entity. UNRWA must continue to provide services to Palestine refugees within and outside refugee camps in all five fields of operation, including occupied Jerusalem, until the question of Palestine refugees was resolved justly, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). His Government condemned the systematic attempts by Israel to shut down all UNRWA institutions in occupied Jerusalem and replace them with Israeli occupation institutions. The international community should guarantee the necessary financial resources to remedy the Agency's budgetary shortfall and enable it to continue performing its vital humanitarian role.

17. The Israeli occupation Government imposed closures and a blockade in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and intercepted international assistance or subjected it to transit charges. It bore full responsibility for the resulting burden on UNRWA. The international community must compel it to end those inhumane practices and compensate the Agency for its losses. Yemen welcomed the agreements concluded recently by UNRWA with the Saudi Fund for Development and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to

support education, health and social services for Palestine refugees.

18. **Ms. Samai** (Algeria) said that her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiatives and continued efforts to ensure sustained, sufficient funding for UNRWA. The Commissioner-General and staff of the Agency were also to be commended for overcoming obstacles to the fulfilment of its mandate. A just and comprehensive peace was a distant prospect; Israel, the occupying Power, persisted in creating facts on the ground and consolidating its occupation and apartheid, in flagrant violation of international law and human rights. The economic and social turmoil resulting from the unprecedented global health crisis and other events had drawn international attention away from the question of Palestine, even though it remained central to achieving peace and stability.

19. The situation of Palestine refugees living in camps, reliant on humanitarian aid, continued to deteriorate. By meeting their needs, UNRWA embodied the international community's commitment to protecting their dignity and finding a just and lasting solution to their plight. The international community must therefore take the necessary measures promptly to help stabilize the Agency's financial situation. Her delegation supported the administrative reforms undertaken by the Agency to modernize its service provision, increase transparency and manage resources effectively.

20. Her delegation called on Member States to vote in favour of renewing the mandate of UNRWA. It continued to support the establishment of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the granting of full, unconditional membership to the State of Palestine in the United Nations.

21. **Ms. Mocanu** (Romania) said that the operations of UNRWA, particularly in the areas of education and health care, contributed to the stability of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan and Lebanon. In recent years, UNRWA had made extraordinary efforts to support Palestine refugees affected by the tragedy in Syria. Its response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was also commendable. Her delegation continued to call for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the context of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. That solution was the only viable option that fulfilled the aspirations of both sides.

22. In 2022, her Government had made a voluntary contribution of €200,000 to UNRWA, an increase on the previous year. It recognized the importance of enabling

UNRWA to fully implement its mandate while ensuring transparency and accountability, pending a just, fair and agreed solution to the question of Palestine refugees as part of a two-State solution.

23. **Mr. Alswagh** (Kuwait) said that the question of Palestine and the plight of Palestine refugees remained the central issue in the Arab and Islamic worlds. The inalienable right of return, enshrined in internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, must be upheld. UNRWA was working commendably to fulfil its mandate under exceptionally difficult circumstances. His delegation rejected any attempts to undermine or alter its mandate or to transfer its responsibilities to any other entity until a just solution was achieved, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In view of the alarming situation in Palestine refugee camps, especially those in Syria, Lebanon, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the international community should provide the support required by the Agency to assist Palestine refugees and promote sustainable development in the health and education sectors. For its part, Kuwait would continue to stand by its Palestinian brethren and support UNRWA.

24. His delegation deplored the systematic and continued attempts by the occupying Power to hinder the Agency's delivery of services and to close Agency service centres in Jerusalem and replace them with occupation institutions, especially in the education sector. Israel bore full responsibility for the additional burdens placed on UNRWA by such illegal and immoral acts, and for misrepresenting the question of Palestine refugees and undermining their legal registration. Member States should vote in favour of renewing the Agency's mandate, and the occupying Power must engage in genuine negotiations to achieve peace on the basis of the two-State solution.

25. **Mr. Suwito** (Indonesia) said that the plight of Palestine refugees remained bleak, and global geopolitical dynamics had diverted attention from the Palestinian cause. While UNRWA had provided a lifeline for millions of Palestinians, the Agency's recurring financial challenges had pushed it to its breaking point. The international community must therefore continue to mobilize support for UNRWA and Palestine refugees and garner tangible political and financial commitment. The United Nations should increase the budget of UNRWA, either through regular or assessed contributions. International protection should also be guaranteed for Palestine refugees and the Agency's work. For its part, Indonesia supported the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA through 2026. In addition to its voluntary contribution to UNRWA, it had pledged \$2.3 million, some of which would be delivered

through the Agency, to support the Palestinian people. His Government also participated in capacity building and technical cooperation for Palestine. It was important to ensure that the Agency was fit for purpose by reviewing its mandate, structure, operation and financial sustainability. His delegation encouraged UNRWA to continue to broaden its donor base, explore innovative sources of funding, and ensure the efficiency and transparency of its operations.

26. A just and lasting solution must be achieved in Palestine. As long as the core issue of Israeli illegal occupation and aggression persisted, Palestinians would continue to face oppression, violence, displacement and denial of their rights, including the right to return to their own land. The international community must prevail upon the occupying Power to comply with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Picking and choosing which countries to take action against had resulted in normalizing occupation and granting impunity for violations. The Palestinian people must be given hope and a future, and Indonesia would always support the realization of their inalienable rights.

27. **Mr. Asokan** (India) said that India was firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine through a negotiated two-State solution, taking into account the aspirations of Palestinians to statehood and the legitimate security concerns of Israel. Pending a peaceful settlement, UNRWA provided critical services to the Palestine refugee community in the Agency's five fields of operation, contributing to regional stability.

28. His delegation supported the renewal of the mandate of UNRWA through 2026 and welcomed the Agency's efforts to ensure transparency, adhere to humanitarian standards and ensure that aid was not misappropriated. Despite the efforts of UNRWA to overcome its severe liquidity crisis through austerity, cost control and optimized efficiency, the funding gap in the Agency's core budget had persisted and continued to grow. In response to that crisis, India had increased its annual contribution to UNRWA from \$1.25 million to \$5 million in 2018 and had already disbursed its 2022 contribution. Member States should consider making new contributions or increasing existing ones. The Committee and the General Assembly should also consider the additional options for funding the core budget proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on the operations of UNRWA (A/71/849).

29. **Ms. Gui Dan** (China) said that Palestine refugees had lived in displacement for more than seven decades, their homeland occupied, their rights trampled on, and

their safety and future denied. UNRWA had provided vital relief and protection to Palestine refugees and embodied the international community's solidarity with them. Even as the needs of Palestine refugees were increasing, international attention and investment in them had been waning. Her delegation called for sufficient political support and adequate, predictable and sustained financial support to be extended to UNRWA, along with the necessary assistance to host countries. China urged Israel to cooperate in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, refrain from hindering the Agency's work in any way, and comprehensively lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip as soon as possible. China was a long-standing contributor to UNRWA, and had helped it to deliver emergency food assistance and combat COVID-19 in the five fields of operation.

30. The protracted question of Palestine refugees resulted from a failure to implement the two-State solution. Her delegation urged Israel to immediately dismantle illegal settlements, fulfil its obligations under international humanitarian law and re-engage in the peace process aimed at a two-State solution. Countries holding significant sway should adopt an objective and impartial stance as part of a genuine effort to promote the peace process. China hoped that the Security Council would take constructive action to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a heightened sense of urgency. Her Government supported the resumption of peace talks to resolve the question of refugees and all other final status issues.

31. **Mr. Lu** (United States) said that the United States was committed to serving as a strong partner to UNRWA in order to enable it to provide the most effective and efficient assistance possible, consistent with the principles of neutrality, tolerance, respect for human rights, equity and non-discrimination. As the largest single donor, his Government had provided nearly \$344 million for critical Agency services in 2022.

32. Unfortunately, poverty, insecurity, and mental health needs were on the rise among Palestinian refugees, compounded by austerity measures. Terrible consequences loomed, such as a spike in gender-based violence and families being forced to choose between food and medicine. UNRWA would therefore require more support from donors. The United States appreciated the recent contribution made by Saudi Arabia and the contributions made by countries at the high-level meeting of 22 September 2022, and encouraged all those that had yet to do so to support the Agency's core services. Many countries failed to match their rhetorical support for UNRWA with financial support. Donors should provide more flexible and

sustained voluntary funding to help alleviate the Agency's financial challenges.

33. **Mr. Tamaura** (Japan) said that it was vital for regional stability that UNRWA continue to fulfil its mandate. His country's support for the Agency predated its own membership of the Organization. While emerging humanitarian crises and geopolitical divides were driving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the global spotlight, soaring global food and fuel prices were making life more difficult for Palestine refugees. In 2022, Japan had provided \$30 million in assistance, including \$6.8 million in emergency food aid. It would continue to work with partners to support UNRWA and Palestine refugees.

34. UNRWA had made remarkable progress on operational efficiency and cost reduction while ensuring transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, financial sustainability remained a challenge, and the Agency's donor base needed to be broadened. Japan was working through various initiatives, including the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, which it had launched in 2013. For over 70 years, UNRWA had contributed to upholding the rights of Palestine refugees and helping them to maintain their dignity and develop their capacities. A smooth mandate renewal would ensure the continuity of the Agency's much-needed services.

35. **Ms. Jerboui** (Morocco) said that the question of Palestine was the pivotal issue in the Middle East and its resolution held the key to defusing regional conflict. There was no substitute for a political solution leading to the establishment of an independent, sovereign, viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the borders of 4 June 1967, living in peace and security alongside Israel. Regrettably, the intractability that had characterized the Middle East peace process had sparked extremism, which, in turn, exacerbated tensions, driving the two sides farther apart and making regional peace and security ever more unlikely.

36. The Bayt Mal al-Quds al-Sharif Agency, the executive field arm of the Al-Quds Committee chaired by the King of Morocco, continued to carry out its mission of improving the social and living conditions of the people of Jerusalem. Morocco funded 86 per cent of that entity's budget.

37. Her delegation supported the extension of the mandate of UNRWA through 2026 and stressed the need to support the Agency financially in order to enable it to provide its vital services to millions of Palestine refugees.

38. **Mr. Razali** (Malaysia) said that the exceptional work of UNRWA had provided vital assistance and protection to 5.8 million Palestine refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Malaysia was deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2021, the number of confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinian civilians had increased by 80 per cent in the West Bank compared to 2020. The increase in violent attacks and the infrastructural damage and loss had severely disrupted the Agency's ability to provide basic services.

39. His delegation strongly condemned the flagrant violations perpetrated by Israel, including the restrictions on movement imposed on UNRWA personnel and goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In addition, the charges levied on the Agency for the handling of shipments and other logistical requirements further strained its financial situation.

40. The international community had a collective responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable segment of the Palestinian people. Malaysia had consistently rendered financial and in-kind assistance to the Government and people of Palestine, including through UNRWA, and had pledged a long-term contribution of \$1 million over five years in 2021.

41. His delegation was concerned at the Agency's continued financial crisis and commended its efforts to improve operational efficiency and mobilize stakeholders. It supported the renewal of the Agency's mandate for a three-year period. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people must be restored, including the right to establish an independent and sovereign State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

42. **Ms. Özgür** (Türkiye) said that since its establishment, UNRWA had provided vital assistance to Palestine refugees, upholding the international community's joint responsibility in that regard. While Türkiye strongly supported the renewal of the Agency's mandate, it was equally necessary to ensure the financial stability of UNRWA. As Chair of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and a long-standing member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, Türkiye had continued to provide financial and in-kind contributions to the Agency's budget in 2022 and encouraged other States to follow suit. Her Government supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to increase assessed contributions to UNRWA from the Organization's regular budget.

43. **Ms. Shapir Ben Naftaly** (Israel) said that in the aftermath of mass population displacements over the

previous century, tens of thousands of people had started new lives across the globe. They were no longer considered refugees, but had instead become important threads in the fabric of countless societies. For millions in need of its help, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the primary international organization dealing with refugees, had worked to solve their problems and, ultimately, to reduce their number. Nevertheless, Palestinian people had been treated differently, as was usually the case at the United Nations, where it was deemed that certain refugees deserved different treatment from other groups, such as Ukrainians, Syrians and Afghans.

44. Israel had never sought to harm assistance extended to the Palestinians, as it believed that the international community should always provide humanitarian aid to those in need. The discussion at hand was about whether States should continue to support the misuse of donor funds by sponsoring relics of a bygone past, and whether UNRWA was truly the most effective organization to help improve the situation of Palestinians and the overall prospects for peace.

45. While UNHCR worked to mitigate the number of refugees, often by means of resettlement and integration in third countries, UNRWA did the opposite. The Agency's mandate now covered more than 5.5 million Palestinian refugees, up from 750,000 in 1949; more than 2.2 million of them were citizens of States in Europe, the Americas or the Middle East. UNRWA diverted funds from persons in real need by claiming that someone who had acquired citizenship in another country was a refugee to whom money must be allocated, as well as by supporting the so-called right of return for millions of Palestinians. Had the Palestinians accepted the partition plan and, by extension, the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, not one Palestinian would have become a refugee. Instead, Palestinians had not only rejected the partition plan, but continued to do everything in their power to prevent the establishment of the Jewish State.

46. The budgetary crisis of UNRWA could not be solved, as it was a problem that would recur year after year as long as the Agency persisted in its problematic practices and distorted definitions of refugees. It had been many years since UNRWA had functioned as a purely humanitarian agency, as such agencies did not employ key officials also working for terrorist organizations, spread hate, encourage violence, perpetuate conflict or deny the right of States Members of the United Nations to exist.

47. Children in UNRWA schools were being taught to hate from schoolbooks that encouraged jihad and

violence and promoted anti-Semitism and intolerance. One teacher had openly declared that anyone who failed to slaughter a Zionist when given the opportunity did not deserve to live, and that all Israel deserved was death. The Agency must be held accountable for the hateful indoctrination and end the spread of Jew-hatred in its schools. The United Nations must address the fact that UNRWA infrastructure, including elementary schools, was being used by Hamas to conduct acts of terror. Indeed, the Agency itself had reported that Hamas rockets had been found at UNRWA schools, and attack tunnels had been unearthed beneath two such schools in Gaza.

48. The path to peace, for which Israel had proven itself a partner, required abandoning the rhetoric of conflict, incitement and terror, and focusing instead on tolerance and dialogue. The Organization and UNRWA must adapt and truly support that cause.

49. *Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman) took the Chair.*

50. **Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway) said that the Agency's recurring budget crisis was having a detrimental effect on it and on the Palestine refugee population. It was therefore important to ensure that more of the operational costs of UNRWA were financed through assessed contributions, based on the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the operations of UNRWA (A/71/849). He welcomed the Committee's progress on the issue and would remain engaged in the follow-up processes. The decision would provide more stable funding and facilitate better burden sharing. All States had a responsibility to ensure that the Agency had sufficient funds to deliver on its mandate. Norway had increased its own contribution and made it multi-year and more flexible. It called for more donors to contribute additional voluntary funding.

51. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that his delegation supported a just, lasting and comprehensive political solution to the question of Palestine, leading to the establishment of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as its capital, based on the two-State solution, the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Moreover, the inalienable right of return must be upheld, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

52. UNRWA worked commendably to alleviate the suffering of Palestine refugees by providing an array of essential services in spite of its own hardship and funding shortfall. Time and again over decades, UNRWA had demonstrated its resilience in the face of difficulties, and it therefore needed support in its bid to cover its shortfall. The role of UNRWA would remain

indispensable until the question of Palestine was settled justly and definitively. The Agency's mandate should be renewed through 2026, and any attempt to alter or undermine that mandate or the responsibility of UNRWA to serve Palestine refugees must be rejected.

53. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation reaffirmed its support for UNRWA in its provision of essential services to Palestine refugees. The Agency's provision of education to refugee children was particularly important, as education and training were the primary means of promoting integral human development, made individuals freer and more responsible and were essential for the defence and promotion of peace.

54. His delegation reiterated its concern regarding the large and growing deficit of UNRWA, which threatened to result in cuts to aid to the most vulnerable at a time of unprecedented need. The Agency's funding problems risked increasing poverty among Palestine refugees, which could, in turn, foster desperation and cause more to choose the path of violence.

55. The Holy See had renewed its annual pledge to UNRWA to support the Agency's care of children, who faced a conflict not of their own making. It encouraged all States to consider making their own contribution to UNRWA.

56. His delegation deeply regretted the escalation of violence in Palestine and Israel and the attendant loss of life. Deeply sorrowful over the death of the Catholic journalist Shirin Abu Akleh, the Holy See hoped that bringing the truth to light would bring her family members and readership some solace.

57. Violence must cease if there was to be any hope of a final peace settlement. Government leaders must heed the plea for peace. Israeli and Palestinian leaders must take time to listen seriously and respectfully and engage in dialogue and mutual understanding. Only along the path of healing could the seeds of peace be sown.

58. A comprehensive and durable settlement of the question of Palestine must resolve the matter of the Holy City of Jerusalem in a manner that fully upheld the rights of all its inhabitants and ensured that all Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers enjoyed free access to their respective holy sites, according to the long-standing status quo. To that end, the Holy See once again called for an internationally guaranteed special status, within which the various aspirations would be adequately and effectively protected, so that no party could override the rights of any other.

59. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the apparent international indifference

to the basic needs of Palestine refugees, including the need for a political solution to the question of Palestine, had significantly deepened their despair. Until such a solution was achieved, leading to the establishment of a State of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the withdrawal by Israel from all occupied Arab territories, UNRWA would be the guarantor of the international obligation to uphold the inalienable rights of Palestine refugees.

60. The League of Arab States firmly supported the application of the State of Palestine, for full United Nations membership, something that would be consistent with General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III). It rejected the claim made by the representative of Israel that the supposed refusal by Palestine to accept the partition plan in 1947 justified all the subsequent Israeli violations of international law that had caused the Palestine refugee crisis.

61. The League welcomed the high-level meeting on UNRWA convened by Jordan and Sweden on 22 September 2022, and the UNRWA pledging conference convened by the President of the General Assembly on 23 June 2022. At those meetings, it had been acknowledged that securing funding for the Agency was incumbent upon all countries, not just the Arab States, which were already making every effort to support Palestine refugees. The recommendations adopted at the meetings, including giving favourable consideration to funding the UNRWA programme budget from the United Nations regular budget, were highly significant.

62. In view of the growing needs of Palestine refugees, the waning support for the Agency owing to competing priorities, and the fear among host countries of a regional conflagration, the mandate of UNRWA must be renewed for three years and Member States must make stronger commitments to address the Agency's severe funding shortfall and ensure predictable, multi-year funding.

63. Member States should support the Commissioner-General of UNRWA in his bid to expand and diversify the Agency's donor base and enable it to settle its debt to the Central Emergency Response Fund. His efforts to carry out administrative reforms, strengthen governance structures, restructure financial operations and move forward with the digitalization of education would also require support.

64. Israel, the occupying Power, must cooperate fully with UNRWA, including by lifting all restrictions on the movement of Agency personnel and vehicles and suspending the imposition of transit charges on humanitarian cargo vehicles and other unjustified,

arbitrary measures that increased the cost of delivering assistance to Palestine refugees. Lastly, it was imperative to consider integrating the UNRWA programme budget into the Organization's regular budget.

65. **Ms. Abdelhady** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was remarkable that the representative of Israel had referred to the partition plan adopted by the General Assembly 75 years earlier, as the plan had yet to be implemented, because Israel had flagrantly obstructed the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. Of all the provisions of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), Israel accepted only its own establishment as a State while trampling every other tenet contained therein. Palestinian leadership had accepted the partition solution in 1988, making a significant historic compromise for the sake of peace. That compromise, however, had gone not only unreciprocated but obstructed. It was well documented, even by Israeli historians and human rights organizations, that plans to expel, displace and replace the Palestinian people had been methodical and deliberate. Moreover, as was clear from the actions of Zionist militias and terrorist groups, they had preceded the partition plan. After the end of hostilities, Israel had refused to allow a single refugee to return, having never had the intention to do so. Nevertheless, its representative persisted in making false comparisons between UNRWA and UNHCR and callously calling into question the right of refugees to return to their ancestral lands, homes and properties, for many still kept the title deeds. All refugees, regardless of origin, were entitled to that right, which was enshrined in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

66. Palestine refugees had indeed been singled out, not for privileged treatment, but by Israel as the only refugees who should not exercise their right of return. Comparisons to Afghan and other refugees were patently false. It was also regrettable that the Committee had been forced to listen to baseless claims impugning the neutrality of UNRWA; slandering thousands of UNRWA staff members, not to mention those States that supported the Agency; and attacking the Agency's education programme, which was supported by the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and whose quality had been verified in independent assessments. All such attacks were aimed at diverting attention from the real reasons for the prolonged injustice, namely, the denial by Israel of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees, to return, just compensation and restitution.

67. Continuous claims that the Agency perpetuated the refugee problem were absurd and offensive. The absence of a solution was the very reason UNRWA existed. As the Committee's deliberations had shown, the overwhelming majority of States viewed the Agency positively and continued to support its mandate, despite the long-running attempts by Israel to discredit UNRWA and deny Palestine refugees their rights based on the false premise that dismantling the Agency would somehow make the refugee problem disappear.

Agenda item 48: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

68. **Ms. Badjie** (Gambia) said that his delegation continued to support the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative and welcomed the Secretary-General's review of the initiative. The Secretariat placed a welcome emphasis on promoting partnerships that bridged the capacity and capability gaps undermining peacekeeping performance. It should intensify its support of co-deployments and smart pledges that could increase participation in United Nations peacekeeping. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's light coordination mechanism was facilitating strong partnerships, bridging the training and capacity gaps of troop- and police-contributing countries and fostering strong engagements to improve peacekeeping.

69. The women and peace and security agenda in peacekeeping could be realized only by deploying more uniformed women personnel to peacekeeping missions, as their presence in larger numbers in the field directly correlated with enhanced mission performance and effectiveness. With the support of the United Nations, Norwegian police trainers in the Gambia were conducting pre-deployment training for an all-female United Nations Selection Assistance and Assessment Team. The Gambia had accelerated national efforts to incorporate a gender perspective into its military and police deployments to United Nations peace operations, diversifying female deployments to include areas requiring special skills. Its national peacekeeping policy had been revised by setting national indicators and targets drawn from the United Nations Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. More than 35 per cent of military experts and staff officers contributed by the Gambia were women, and in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, women accounted for half of the 32 police officers in the Gambian contingent.

70. The Gambia remained fully committed to the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Its peacekeepers underwent

gender-sensitive pre-deployment and in-mission training to ensure good conduct and discipline.

71. One of the first African countries to respond to the conflict in Darfur as part of the African Union Mission in Sudan, the Gambia had maintained its contribution throughout the transition to the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Strengthening partnerships, particularly with regional organizations, was vital to harnessing the comparative advantage of first responders and other relevant stakeholders in matters of international peace and security. The ongoing partnership between the United Nations and the African Union held great promise for conflict prevention and response. It was crucial that African Union-led peace support operations receive adequate financing, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

72. **Ms. Quashie** (Ghana) said that as the seventh largest troop-contributing country, Ghana had actively helped develop peacekeeping operations and adapt them to the shifting dynamics of conflict environments. International peacekeeping must evolve to better respond to the dramatic change in the scope, scale and complexity of armed conflicts. Ghana remained concerned by the insufficiently prominent attention to politics in some peacekeeping missions, something that led to protracted conflicts. Despite the inclusion of mandates for force intervention brigades in some missions, the structure and focus of present peacekeeping arrangements were inappropriate counter-terrorism instruments. The use of the Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework, while welcome, should be strengthened in a manner that ensured that the expectations set forth in mandates were matched by the performance of individual troop- and police-contributing countries and individual staff members at the mission.

73. There was a need for enhanced pre-deployment training to counter improvised explosive devices to address, where necessary, the increasing threat of the use of such devices by extremist groups against peacekeepers, as well as the attendant high casualty rates. While the demands on United Nations peacekeeping were greater than ever, overstressing available resources and capacities, all stakeholders must commit to the achievement of mandates for sustaining peace.

74. **Mr. Smith** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that CARICOM would continue to contribute to global peacekeeping efforts given the importance the region placed on maintaining peace and security. Peacekeepers required tremendous courage, in view of the high

security risks of their work. Since 1948, 4,345 peacekeepers had died in the line of duty. In February 2019, Clive Peck, a Jamaican national, had been killed, along with two other United Nations staff, when a bomb-laden vehicle had exploded in Benghazi, Libya.

75. CARICOM would continue to work closely in the Committee and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to formulate efficient policies to guide peace operations and provide a framework for the protection and well-being of peacekeepers. Regrettably, it had not been possible to adopt a substantive report at the previous session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Nevertheless, CARICOM looked forward to engaging constructively with other groups and delegations at the forthcoming session.

76. CARICOM welcomed efforts to measure and improve the performance of uniformed personnel and accountability in peacekeeping operations, in line with the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative. It supported the active participation of women in all activities relating to the maintenance of peace and security, and welcomed the progress made towards mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout the Department of Peace Operations. That Department should continue to increase the number of women officers in peacekeeping missions, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular the landmark resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security. CARICOM looked forward to reports outlining efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda, including the finalization of the Gender Forward Looking Strategy of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

77. As a group of small island developing States, CARICOM was keenly aware of the destabilizing effect of social and political unrest, particularly in Haiti. For many years, that country had hosted various United Nations special forces, the current one being the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti. CARICOM was grateful for the Office's efforts to support the Government of Haiti in its fight to restore the rule of law and democracy. In order to consolidate the progress made in Haiti and maintain an environment conducive to sustainable development, the international community must remain actively engaged in partnership with the Government and people of Haiti. CARICOM remained committed to assisting and advocating for Haiti as it progressed towards a sustainable peace.

78. **Mr. Parihar** (India) said that non-State actors played a prominent role in conflicts, which were increasingly fragmented. Terrorists and radical groups were able to manipulate the breakdown in the rule of

law, make illicit economic gains and exploit natural resources for their own ends. In such settings, peacekeeping could help create, but were not a substitute for, the conditions for the social and political engagement on which solutions to conflict hinged. United Nations peacekeeping missions should have clear, unambiguous mandates, matching tasks with resources. By contrast, skewed mandates would lead to under-resourced peacekeepers who underachieved and undermined faith in the United Nations system. In order to avoid that situation, troop- and police-contributing countries should be consulted as a matter of course when formulating mandates.

79. Peacekeepers in the current environment must be agile, mobile and situationally aware. Technology must be used judiciously and ethically, giving due consideration to host country sensitivities. Trust and smooth coordination between mission leadership and host States were essential, and missions should adhere to the fundamental principles of peacekeeping and encourage national ownership in the peacebuilding process.

80. The role of women peacekeepers in effective peacekeeping was paramount. In 2007, India had deployed its first-ever all-women peacekeeping contingent in Liberia, inspiring an entire generation of Liberian women to participate in the security sector. Over the previous few years, India had developed an ecosystem that would enable it to deploy more women at higher ranks.

81. As multidimensional peacekeeping operations were collective endeavours, all mission components – military, civilian and leadership – must be evaluated holistically. Host States bore the primary responsibility for protecting civilians, and their security forces should be provided with adequate training and logistical support for that purpose.

82. Missions had a responsibility to ensure that peacekeepers were adequately provisioned. It was therefore deplorable that forces deployed amidst heavy fighting as part of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lacked sufficient protective equipment.

83. Missions must also ensure that their capabilities and mandates were communicated clearly to local communities. It was equally important to bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against peacekeepers. Lastly, peacekeeping missions required an exit strategy defined at the outset. Redundant peacekeeping missions that remained active for political purposes were a drain on the Organization's already depleted resources.

84. As a prominent troop- and police-contributing country that had more than 5,800 peacekeepers deployed across nine peacekeeping operations, India regretted the failure of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to adopt a substantive report at its 2022 session and looked forward to constructive engagement with other members and organizations at the Special Committee's next session.

85. The construction at United Nations Headquarters of a memorial wall dedicated to fallen peacekeepers should proceed promptly, as it would be an apt recognition of their supreme sacrifice. India stood ready to contribute, financially and otherwise, to that noble undertaking.

86. **Mr. Pieris** (Sri Lanka) said that, from his own country's long experience with peacekeeping, involving a conflict that had spanned 30 years, three aspects of peacekeeping had emerged as fundamental, namely, creating stability, restoring State institutions and addressing the socioeconomic dimensions of conflict at an international level, in line with United Nations norms and standards. Such standards encompassed providing security for civilians and preventing crime and maintaining peace in conflict zones.

87. Beyond the core peacekeeping function of maintaining a ceasefire, peacekeeping activity also entailed a direct attempt to reduce the means and incentives available to actors to resume hostilities, through disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, security sector reforms and arms control for light and heavy weapons systems. In his country's peacekeeping experience, the integration of former combatants required alternative avenues for the pursuit of wealth and social recognition, in addition to reducing the material means of waging war. It was also important to build or restore key State functions that could generate basic public goods and confer legitimacy on the process, and build the ability of the State and society to manage conflict peacefully and develop the socioeconomic infrastructure. The goal of peacekeeping was both to create a culture of peace and to develop civil society organizations and a viable private sector that had the capacity to represent diverse social interests and constrain the power of warring factions.

88. With more than 1.5 billion people in countries affected by violent conflict, a global ceasefire would provide the necessary space and time for countries and United Nations agencies to deliver on the Organization's commitments to make a sustainable, long-term investment to eradicate poverty and violence and address inequalities and human rights violations. Ultimately, peacekeeping would fail if nations felt that

their interests and concerns had not been equally valued. Over the long term, a realignment of competing priorities and values was urgently needed with a view to preventing future crises.

89. **Archbishop Caccia** (Observer for the Holy See) said that in an era of environmental catastrophe, human rights violations and rising conflict, United Nations peacekeeping operations offered the hope that by working together, nations could overcome globalized indifference and promote just and lasting peace. Peace was not merely the absence of war; it could be achieved only by striving for justice through dialogue and pursuing reconciliation and mutual development. Peacekeeping operations therefore belonged in the broader framework of peacebuilding and development activities. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, peacekeeping operations should prioritize the protection of civilian life, the facilitation and monitoring of political settlements and the promotion and protection of human rights.

90. Although host States bore the primary responsibility to protect civilians, they often lacked the means and political will to do so. In such situations, peacekeeping operations should help ensure the security of non-combatants threatened by violence. Over the long term, such assistance must include sufficient capacity-building support for host State forces and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, particularly during mission drawdowns or transitions. The ability of peacekeeping operations to protect civilians often formed the basis of their legitimacy among the host State population, and its loss of such legitimacy imperilled all aspects of their mandate.

91. Effective peacekeeping operations must be governed by clear, credible and achievable mandates. Negotiated settlements would be brittle and transient without a holistic approach that prioritized the common good over partisan interests. The seeds of peace could be sown only where human dignity was allowed to flourish. It was therefore most welcome that nearly all United Nations peacekeeping mandates included a human rights component, ensuring that host populations were respected and valued in a manner conducive to their integral human development.

92. In the face of climate change, peacekeeping operations must adapt to extreme weather events, dwindling natural resources and the resulting displacement of civilian populations. Effective monitoring of environmental conditions was key, especially in areas of active hostilities.

93. The Holy See welcomed all efforts to prevent and eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers. Such acts violated the human dignity of victims and reduced trust between missions and local populations. In addressing such abuse, it was essential for the Organization to provide victims and any children born as a result of exploitation and abuse with adequate psychological and social support.

94. **Ms. Metcalf** (International Committee of the Red Cross) said that modern-day conflicts involved dense networks of actors and were often fought in coalitions with partners, allies and proxies. States and non-State armed groups provided one another with various types of support, including arms transfers, advice, force generation, training, partnered detention operations, and logistical support and doctrinal support. Peacekeeping missions also involved numerous types of support relationships between troop- and police-contributing countries, host States and others.

95. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization, was present in more than 100 countries and had expertise in international humanitarian law. It was thus uniquely positioned to evaluate how the evolution of conflicts affected civilian suffering. ICRC had observed that partnerships offered opportunities to leverage influence for better respect for international humanitarian law and better protection outcomes. However, support relationships among parties in armed conflict could also heighten risks, as the lines of accountability could be blurred and responsibilities diluted when armed actors operated alongside one another in loose coalitions and with unclear coordination.

96. ICRC therefore recommended that Member States participating in any kind of conflict-related partnerships, including peacekeeping missions, reflect on their supporting or partnering practices. The United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy offered a sound framework to influence the behaviour of the parties supported by the Organization. Crucially, peacekeeping missions must acknowledge their responsibilities to protect civilians and ensure the humane treatment of the captured, wounded and detainees, especially during a new deployment of national forces or joint security operations. The ICRC publication “Allies, partners and proxies: managing support relationships in armed conflict to reduce the human costs of war” provided detailed guidance on practical measures to consider in managing those relationships, ranging from incorporating international humanitarian law in the development of military doctrines to monitoring supported partners’ compliance

with international humanitarian law. When planning support for military engagements, States should examine how relationships were structured and clarify roles and responsibilities, thus ensuring that effective structures and safeguards were in place in the early stages of a support relationship and improving accountability and compliance with international humanitarian law. Support relationships should be formed in such a manner to avoid unnecessary and unlawful human suffering.

97. **Ms. Kontoleontos** (Observer for International Organization of La Francophonie) said that as the largest peacekeeping operations were in Francophone countries, the use of French by mission personnel and their capacity to adapt to the culture of the host country made peace operations more effective. The International Organization of La Francophonie had been working with the United Nations and Member States to promote a greater integration of linguistic and cultural considerations into peacekeeping activities. Such considerations had a direct impact on the delivery of peacekeeping mandates, the capacity for effective dialogue with the local authorities and populations and the protection of civilians and the security of deployed uniformed and civilian personnel.

98. Initiatives undertaken by her organization in 2022 in the context of its long-standing partnership with the United Nations included a senior mission leadership course whose candidates were selected according to strict gender parity criteria; the development of a course for women military officers; the provision of French-language instruction to personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali using a training method developed for military officials; awareness-raising of United Nations recruitment opportunities for French-speaking officials in Francophone countries; and the creation of a new platform of French-language expertise and training for peacekeeping operations. Her organization stood ready to carry forward its efforts in an agile, innovative manner, empowered by its achievements and strengthened partnerships.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.