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- Chair:* Mr. Amorín (Uruguay)
- later:* Mr. Abudu-Birresborn (Vice-Chair) (Ghana)

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

Agenda item 59: 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/78/127-E/2023/95)

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/78/127-E/2023/95), took note of the unprecedented death and destruction witnessed by the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel during the previous week.

2. During the reporting period, from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, Israel had continued to employ policies and practices that were contrary to Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Some Israeli practices could amount to the forcible transfer or collective punishment of protected persons, which was a grave breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention). Lack of implementation of Security Council resolutions pertaining to the question of Palestine undermined internationally agreed frameworks in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and across the region, including the women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. Israeli policies continued to deprive Palestinians of access to their own natural resources to the benefit of Israeli settlements and industries. Israeli-imposed restrictions, expansion of the illegal settlements and other practices not only prevented development but also exacerbated the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and limited the ability of Palestinians to exercise their fundamental human rights. Such policies were having a cumulative, multilayered and intergenerational impact. They had brought about deteriorating living conditions, forced displacement, “de-development”, asymmetric dependence on Israel and institutional dependence on foreign aid. Sexual and gender-based violence and obstruction of the access of Palestinian women and girls to education and health care were being exacerbated by the blockade and military escalations in Gaza, and by the creation of a coercive environment in the West Bank.

4. Israeli policies had rendered the Palestinian economy highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks and made it highly dependent on Israel and external transfers. Not only had gross domestic product not recovered from the coronavirus disease pandemic, but it remained below its 2011 level. The 16-year blockade on Gaza amounted to collective punishment, rendering well over half of Gaza’s more than 2 million residents in need of humanitarian assistance. Unemployment stood at 45 per cent, and 29 per cent of households were classified as living in “catastrophic” or “extreme” conditions.

5. The Israeli annexation of the occupied Syrian Golan and support of settlement activity were in violation of international law. Discriminatory Israeli policies benefited settlers at the expense of the inhabitants, particularly with regard to land and water allocation, planning and zoning, and demining.

6. Adherence to international law was imperative for securing justice and peace for all those living in the region. The United Nations would continue to work towards the establishment of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, living side by side in peace with a secure Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions and international law.

7. **Ms. Nasser-Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly the Gaza Strip, had seen horrific deterioration due to oppressive Israeli practices that amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Israel was being allowed to act with impunity. There was no end in sight to the Israeli colonial occupation and apartheid regime.

8. The Israeli occupation was intentionally killing and injuring innocent children, women, men and older persons. It confiscated land, built settlements, demolished homes, destroyed livelihoods, plundered resources and restricted the movement of persons and goods. Settler violence and terrorism created a coercive environment that contributed to displacement that amounted to forcible transfer, a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

9. The illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza amounted to collective punishment of Gaza’s more than 2 million residents. Poverty, hunger and unemployment had been compounded over the years by repeated Israeli aggression. Most recently, during the previous week, Israel, the occupying Power, had not only declared war on Gaza but had also decided to unlawfully starve and punish civilians by cutting off electricity, water, fuel and food. Her delegation urgently called on the United

Nations and all States to stop those crimes against humanity and provide immediate humanitarian aid.

10. As long as war crimes and persecution continued, there could be no peace. As long as there was no peace, it was impossible to speak of development. The colonial occupation and apartheid regime, including its inhumane blockade of Gaza, must be brought to an end so that the Palestinian people could live as a free people in peace and security in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

11. **Mr. Puentes** (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the 2030 Agenda had recognized the link between sustainable development on the one hand and peace and security on the other, and had called for the removal of obstacles to realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation. The ESCWA report highlighted the detrimental effect of the Israeli occupation on living conditions and social and economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and showed how Israeli policies and practices had a severe humanitarian, economic, social and political impact on Palestinians and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights. Palestinians and Syrians living under occupation would never be able to achieve sustainable development as long as they were denied sovereignty over their natural resources.

12. Continued colonization of Palestinian land by Israel was a grave breach of international humanitarian law, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and numerous United Nations resolutions, including, inter alia, Security Council resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). The Group demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called upon all States to distinguish in their relevant dealings between the territory of the State of Israel and the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. It reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease its exploitation and depletion of those resources, which undermined sustainable development. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's reaffirmation of 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. The international community should provide protection to the Palestinian people and mobilize to protect the prospects of a two-

State solution with the peoples living side by side in peace and security within the 1967 borders.

13. **Ms. Al-halique** (Jordan), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Group wished to draw attention to the resolution adopted by the League of Arab States meeting in extraordinary session at the ministerial level on 11 October 2023 on political action to stop the Israeli aggression and bring about peace and security. That resolution called for an immediate end to the recent escalation and the release of all civilians, prisoners and detainees.

14. The ESCWA report showed how the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan violated the sovereignty of the inhabitants over their natural resources and affected all aspects of their lives. Israeli restrictions and settlement expansion were not only impeding development, but also further fragmenting Palestinian territory. The Group reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, sovereignty over their natural resources, and economic, social and cultural development in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and United Nations resolutions. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's continued affirmation of 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.

15. Israel, the occupying Power was exploiting West Bank mineral resources while denying permits to Palestinian companies, notably in area C, which constituted more than 60 per cent of the area of the West Bank and was the richest in terms of the availability of natural resources. Palestinians continued to be prevented by Israel from exploiting water resources from the Jordan River and groundwater, and mineral resources offered by the Dead Sea. Palestinians and Syrians were denied the right to work and health care. Drinking water and irrigation water were allocated unfairly. Land was being confiscated and settlement construction continued unabated. 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 \(2016\)](#). It also called on all States to pressure companies to withdraw investments from the settlements.

16. **Mr. Al Rubkhi** (Oman), speaking also on behalf of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in their capacities as the States members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), said that the GCC States wished to express their concern about the violations documented in the ESCWA report. Israeli restrictions were preventing Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan from exercising their basic human rights, and were bringing about deteriorating living conditions, forced displacement and development setbacks. Israeli policies were in violation of Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

17. The GCC States called for an immediate end to the Israeli war against Gaza. All sides should exercise restraint. The international community should take urgent action towards that end before the cycle of violence widened, for which all would pay a heavy price. All civilians, prisoners and detainees should be protected. Electricity and water should be restored. International assistance, food, fuel and medicine should be allowed to enter Gaza immediately under the auspices of United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The international community and the Arab States should provide UNRWA with the funding it needed to meet the challenges posed at a critical juncture.

18. The Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan were occupied territories subject to international law. Israel, the occupying Power, should withdraw from those areas immediately. The international community should uphold the right of the Palestinian people to return and compensation as part of a comprehensive solution that addressed all the final-status issues, in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The GCC States warned against any attempt to displace the crisis to neighbouring States.

19. **Mr. Al-naamah** (Qatar) said that his delegation wished to caution against calls for the evacuation of northern Gaza. To force civilians to take refuge in neighbouring States was a violation of international law. The international community should act urgently to open humanitarian corridors to allow medicines and food supplies into Gaza and evacuate injured civilians.

20. The ESCWA report had detailed the effects of long-term occupation on Palestinian economic and social conditions, and the cumulative impact of repeated incursions against the Aqsa Mosque, violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, settlement expansion and

arbitrary treatment of Palestinian prisoners. Palestinians were unable to exercise their basic human rights. Israeli-imposed restrictions, expansion of the illegal settlements and other practices not only prevented development but also exacerbated the fragmentation of the Palestinian territory. In Gaza, the 16-year siege imposed on one of the world's most densely populated areas affected all aspects of life.

21. General Assembly resolution [77/187](#) 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. Qatar was committed to improving Palestinian living standards. Over the years, the Qatar Fund for Development had contributed some \$1.5 billion to Gaza reconstruction. Sustainable peace in the region required a just and comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue in line with the Arab Peace Initiative that ensured the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

22. **Mr. Peñalver Portal** (Cuba) said that his delegation condemned the killing of civilians, especially women, children and humanitarian workers; the indiscriminate shelling of the population in Gaza; the destruction of homes, hospitals and civilian infrastructure; and the deprivation of water, food, electricity and fuel services to the population of Gaza. Those actions were serious violations of international humanitarian law. Cuba called for a ceasefire and the immediate entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The international community could not stand idly by and watch the extermination of the Palestinian people. The ultimate goal was a two-State solution with an independent and sovereign Palestine within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. In the meantime, negotiations were needed to stop the recent escalation.

23. In Palestine, the normal challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals faced by developing countries were compounded by restrictions placed on the economy by the occupation. The ESCWA report showed how the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan were being deprived of their rights to development and access to their natural resources. His delegation called for full and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Syrian Golan and all other occupied Arab territories, and compliance by Israel with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

24. **Mr. Al Nahhas** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the recent events in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were the result of the colonial settler occupation, against which Palestinians were exercising their right to defend themselves. The occupation's fascist crimes in Gaza were intended to crush the dreams and break the will of the Palestinian people by giving them a choice between death and displacement. The Israeli occupation authorities were exhibiting their hysteria by indiscriminately bombing infrastructure, schools, hospitals, homes and UNRWA facilities, and cutting off civilians from food, water and energy.

25. The previous year had seen an increase in the numbers of crimes and victims. Massacres and military attacks continued, including missile strikes against Syrian cities and ports. Just the previous week, both Aleppo International Airport and Damascus International Airport had been struck and put out of service. The occupation forces were intent on going ahead with their grave violations in arrogant disregard of international law. They were now trying to export their crises to the region at large.

26. The ESCWA report once again documented the theft of natural resources in the occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan. The Israeli occupation was continuing its discriminatory practices against Syrian residents who rejected Israeli citizenship. Settlements continued to be built, and Syrian farmers were being denied access to water. Residents were already confined to just a small fraction of the territory, as Israel proceeded with its attempt to impose demographic change. The occupation authorities needed to be held accountable and United Nations resolutions implemented – especially Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#) and [497 \(1981\)](#) – in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation and the threat that it posed to peace, security and sustainable development.

27. **Ms. Jalili** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that as all were aware, the situation had escalated dramatically since the publication of the ESCWA report. A genocide was occurring in Gaza before the eyes of the international community. The death toll had already exceeded 2,000 persons, half of whom were children. The inhumane blockade was deliberately depriving Gazans of food, water and medicine. The Israeli occupation was violating the peremptory norms of international law, including the prohibition against the acquisition of territory by force, the inherent right to self-determination and the prohibition of racial discrimination and apartheid. The rights and dignity of Palestinians had been trampled on for years. A ground invasion by Israel would create both a humanitarian disaster and a threat to regional and global peace and

security. The international community's response to the situation had fallen short.

28. The Islamic Republic of Iran regarded the Golan as an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic and called on Member States to comply with their international obligations and refuse to accept illegal acts perpetrated by the Israeli regime against the Syrian Arab Republic. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should take decisive action to compel the Israeli regime to renounce its aggressive actions, occupation and atrocities and adhere to its obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. The United Nations should provide immediate assistance to alleviate the hardship faced by the Palestinian and Syrian populations in the occupied territories. Prompt international intervention was needed to avert a humanitarian crisis and preserve international peace and security.

29. **Mr. Al-Khalidi** (Iraq) said that the ESCWA report showed how the Israeli occupation affected the economic, social and security conditions of Palestinians and Syrians living under occupation. The occupying Power pursued policies and practices inconsistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Settlement expansion, home demolitions and restrictions on movement all had a severe impact on the ability of Palestinians to exercise their basic rights.

30. Of the 1,800 military orders issued by the occupation authorities since 1967, not one had mentioned Palestinian rights; all had been for the benefit of Israeli settlers. Israeli actions in Jerusalem were in flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions, international law and human rights. Throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, occupation troops used excessive force to impose racist and discriminatory policies. Palestinians were being denied the use of land and water resources that were rightfully theirs under international law, and should be compensated. Iraq appreciated the efforts of international and regional organizations to alleviate the suffering of the inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. It called for further international support, and looked forward to the day when the occupation would come to an end and the Palestinian people could exercise their rights and pursue their aspirations in an independent State.

31. **Mr. Al Saud** (Saudi Arabia) said that the ESCWA report had shown how the ongoing violations perpetrated by the occupation affected the living conditions of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. The Palestinian issue was

a priority for his country, as it was for all Arabs and Muslims. Saudi Arabia would work tirelessly to bring about the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the other internationally agreed terms of reference. The Kingdom condemned any unilateral measures that undermined the two-State solution.

32. Sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan was intimately tied to peace, security and justice. Over the years, the Kingdom had provided some \$1.2 billion in support through UNRWA, most recently having made a \$28 million contribution. It had also provided some \$109 million through the Saudi Fund for Development to finance infrastructure for electricity, water, sanitation, communications and roads.

33. His delegation reiterated its warning that continuation of the occupation's practices, including denial of rights and systematic provocations at holy sites, would inflame the situation. It called for an immediate end to escalation and the targeting of civilians, rejected any forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, and urged delivery of the assistance necessary to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

34. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that it was important to remember that the ongoing conflict had its roots in the nineteenth century and that the Palestinian people had been denied their right to live in full sovereignty for some seven decades. His delegation condemned the violence and extended its condolences to the families and friends of the victims. He thanked the Secretary-General for transmitting the ESCWA report, and thanked the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report on the legality of the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

35. Israel continued to implement policies and practices inconsistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including settlement expansion, home demolition and restrictions on movement. Israeli policies appeared to constitute collective punishment against an entire population. The occupation had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Even before the onset of the current violence, Palestinians were being denied basic services, employment opportunities and essential resources.

36. As the Secretary-General had stated, even wars had rules. His delegation called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law, refrain from

disproportionate use of force and protect civilians, health workers and critical infrastructure. There should be no limitations on humanitarian access. It was an ethical imperative to safeguard the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people.

37. **Mr. Pary Rodriguez** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his delegation expressed its solidarity with the victims of the Israeli genocide. Bombing of civilians, forced displacement and denial of humanitarian aid did not befit a State that claimed to promote democratic values. The ESCWA report showed how desperate the situation in Palestine had been even prior to the recent events. It was not even possible to speak of sustainable development in Gaza when electricity, water and access to food and medicine were being cut off. The current escalation was merely another phase in the policy of apartheid and extermination that Israel had been pursuing for years.

38. The Israeli occupation had been preventing millions of Palestinians from exercising their basic rights, including the right to economic development, for almost 70 years. The occupying Power needed to allow them access to their resources and stop its settlement building and other activities that were further fragmenting the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Plurinational State of Bolivia recognized the State of Palestine as a member of the international community and called on Member States to continue multilateral efforts to ensure that it regained its rights and achieved full sovereignty so as to allow it to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the people of Palestine were caught in an endless cycle of despair and destruction. Her delegation was concerned about the ongoing violence and echoed the Secretary-General's call to refrain from attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Israeli order for over 1 million Gazans to relocate to the south within a 24-hour period was a clear violation of international law and should be immediately reversed. Indiscriminate attacks had already resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure. Medical and food supplies should be allowed to enter through humanitarian corridors at once.

40. The ESCWA report shed light on the economic and social repercussions of prolonged occupation. The recent events threatened to leave the people of Gaza even further behind. Maldives remained committed to the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

41. **Ms. Al Hammadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that her delegation wished to express its condolences for the loss of civilian life and urged an immediate cessation of hostilities. Her country had already made a \$20 million emergency contribution to UNRWA and was airlifting humanitarian aid to Lebanon and Egypt for delivery to Gaza. Her delegation also extended its condolences to the families of UNRWA staff who had fallen victim in the course of performing their humanitarian duties.

42. Over the years, the United Arab Emirates had contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to the Palestinian cause, including over \$180 million to UNRWA during the 2016–2023 period. It had also contributed \$35 million to support the Jenin refugee camp. Her delegation was extremely concerned about the denial of humanitarian access at a time when hospitals were suffering from shortages of medical supplies. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibited collective punishment. Such measures would only put the Sustainable Development Goals further out of reach in the Gaza Strip, which already suffered from widespread poverty, high unemployment, food and water insecurity, and deteriorating health and education services.

43. The United Arab Emirates stressed the need for the international community to address the current humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. A long-term solution would require ending the war and restarting the political process. Her country would continue to work with regional and international partners towards a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive solution that met the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. The United Arab Emirates renewed its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to their natural resources, and urged a redoubling of efforts for a two-State solution with an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid Principles.

44. **Mr. Ben Naftaly** (Israel) said that once again, the Committee was considering the same biased resolution and biased report. Over the previous few days, terrorists had gunned down Israeli civilians, fired thousands of rockets, killed babies, raped women and carried hundreds of hostages back to Gaza. Yet the ESCWA report mentioned Hamas only once, as a historical footnote, and the resolution did not mention Hamas at all. There were no words to describe the depravity of that terrorist organization, which was now on display for the entire world to see.

45. His delegation had repeatedly asked ESCWA to review its practices, and in particular to examine the indoctrination of young children who were taught, sometimes with United Nations funding, that killing Israelis and Jews was a praiseworthy activity. Unfortunately, rather than pause for self-reflection, ESCWA was no doubt already trying to figure out how spin and minimize the events of the previous few days. The approach of ESCWA did nothing to help resolve the situation in the Middle East. On the contrary, its deliberate blindness to Hamas terrorism and one-sided accusations against Israel just made the situation worse. Events such as the recent terrorist attack on Israel were the inevitable result.

46. **Ms. Almezyad** (Kuwait) said that it was a priority of her country's foreign policy to support the Palestinian people in its struggle to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international resolutions. Unfortunately, home demolitions, settlement expansion, forced displacement and civilian casualties had become part of Palestinian daily life. Her delegation rejected the occupying Power's campaign to alter the facts on the ground and its exploitation and depletion of Palestinian natural resources. It condemned the ongoing escalation, which was in violation of international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions. She called on the international community to take measures to lift the siege, ensure delivery of humanitarian aid through United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and put an end to the vicious war that did not distinguish between civilians and military targets.

47. Kuwait supported all peaceful steps taken by the State of Palestine at all levels. It called on the Security Council to put a just end to the conflict so that the Middle East could enjoy security, stability and development. The occupying Power needed to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law. Palestinians should be able to exercise their rights like other peoples of the world.

48. **Ms. Marin Sevilla** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her delegation extended its condolences to the families of innocent civilians who had lost their lives in the new spiral of violence. It rejected the intensified blockade against Gaza and attacks on civilian infrastructure. An immediate and lasting end needed to be put to the violence, collective punishment and war crimes. The occupation posed the main obstacle to development in Palestine by controlling natural resources and making it impossible for Palestinians to implement the 2030 Agenda.

49. The ESCWA report documented the continuous violation by the occupying Power of the Palestinian people's social, economic and cultural rights. In the West Bank, severe water shortages continue to be reported as Israel retained full control of the distribution and extraction of most water resources. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupying Power was expanding settlements, exploiting natural resources and discriminating against the Syrian inhabitants in the distribution of water. Her delegation called for countries to end any commercial relationships with settler businesses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. It urged an immediate ceasefire, an end to the violence and compliance with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), which demanded the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities.

50. **Ms. Albinkhalil** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain supported a just and permanent resolution of the Palestinian issue which, in accordance with the two-State solution and international resolutions, guaranteed the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The ESCWA report painted a dark picture of living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Bahrain provided assistance to the Palestinian people through UNRWA. It was imperative for the Palestinian people to have their rights restored, including their right to their natural resources. Dialogue rather than violence was the way to achieve peace. Protection of civilians in Gaza should be a top priority.

51. **Mr. Jadoon** (Pakistan) said that the ESCWA report had illustrated vividly that there could be no sustainable development without peace and security, and no peace and security without sustainable development. During the reporting period, hundreds of Palestinians had been killed and thousands injured, including women and children. The victims had included veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Electricity, fuel and water supplies to Gaza had now been cut off and 1 million Gazans had been ordered to move south amid continuous bombing. Such Israeli actions, which were in flagrant breach of international law and United Nations resolutions, amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

52. His delegation demanded that Israel fulfil its obligations as the occupying Power by lifting the blockade and allowing delivery of humanitarian aid. The unprecedented gravity of the situation demanded urgent intervention by the United Nations to bring about a ceasefire and provide international protection. Pakistan was doing its part to supply humanitarian assistance and was exploring ways of reaching the population in need. The international community needed to work for a two-State solution with a viable, sovereign and contiguous

State of Palestine within the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as its capital.

53. **Mr. Khandakar Prince** (Bangladesh) said that the 2030 Agenda had called, inter alia, for removal of the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation. Unfortunately, half a century of occupation, settlement expansion, home demolition, appropriation of land and resources, and restrictions on movement had denied the Palestinian people any chance at sustainable development. The ESCWA report detailed how persistent Israeli policies and practices in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law had affected the social and economic conditions. Despite the annual resolution, Israel, the occupying Power, continued to exploit, deplete and endanger natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan. The ongoing blockade and disproportionate and indiscriminate military campaign by Israel in Gaza would only exacerbate the situation.

54. Israel should end its occupation of all Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan. The Palestinian people and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan should have access to their land and water resources and be compensated for the resources already lost. The decline in UNRWA funding should be reversed and support for poverty relief, education, women's empowerment, health care and capacity development needed to be scaled up. Failure to adhere to international law and implement Security Council resolutions was undermining achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. His delegation called for an immediate ceasefire 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.

55. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana) said that the violence of the previous 10 days had taken thousands of Palestinian and Israeli lives, injured tens of thousands, destroyed civilian infrastructure and further deepened the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Her delegation called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and condemned attacks against civilians by both sides. Urgent steps should be taken to restart negotiations. A two-State solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions was the only viable end to the conflict. The ongoing violence would only deepen distrust and put a solution further out of reach.

56. The Palestinian people faced enormous challenges to realizing the 2030 Agenda. The millions of Palestinians living under occupation needed to have

their rights to their natural resources restored if they were not to be left behind. The rights to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity were enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The Palestinian people and the population of the Syrian Golan should be able to enjoy an adequate standard of living, health care, peace, security and settled borders. Guyana called on the international community to step up efforts to stem the current bloodshed and put the peace process back on track.

57. *Mr. Abudu-Birresborn (Ghana), Vice-Chair, took the Chair*

58. **Ms. Adnan** (Malaysia) said that discrimination, denial of basic human rights, harsh living condition and confiscation of land and property were inconsistent with peaceful coexistence. Ignoring the plight of the Palestinians was a moral failure that would make the pledge to leave no one behind meaningless. Her delegation called on Israel to end its occupation, stop exploiting Palestinian resources and comply with United Nations resolutions.

59. An already fragile situation was being made worse by the UNRWA funding crisis. Malaysia had been a regular contributor to UNRWA since 1978 and would be providing an additional \$1 million over the next few years. The lack of an international response to the violations being perpetrated against Palestinians and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan laid bare a double standard. She called on all delegations to take part in regional and multilateral forums seeking sustainable, comprehensive and peaceful solutions.

60. **Mr. Prabowo** (Indonesia) said that just when the international community was hoping for an improvement, the situation had deteriorated dramatically over the previous few days. His delegation condemned all violence against civilians. It was deeply concerned about the effects of water, food and electricity being cut off. All parties should uphold international law, including international humanitarian law. There should be an immediate cessation of violence and humanitarian assistance should be allowed access. Civilian well-being should be a priority. UNRWA should receive the support it needed and humanitarian workers should be protected. A credible peace process needed to be advanced with a view to realizing the two-State solution in line with the internationally agreed parameters.

61. **Mr. Merabet** (Algeria) said that Gaza was under attack by a Zionist occupation that had no regard for civilians, older persons, children, international staff, hospitals, mosques or ambulances. The ESCWA report showed that even before the current escalation, the occupation had been implementing policies and

practices contrary to Security Council resolutions, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Restrictions, settlement expansion and other practices prevented development, exacerbated the fragmentation of Palestinian territory and denied Palestinians their fundamental human rights.

62. Palestinians had been impoverished by the systematic Israeli strategy to subjugate the Palestinian economy by controlling resources and appropriating agricultural land, in violation of article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property” and the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 77/187. The occupation authorities arbitrarily restricted the movement of goods and hampered exports with prohibitive taxes. International organizations should urgently intervene to protect Palestinian civilians until such time as the issue was resolved by the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

63. **Mr. Al-barati** (Yemen) said that his country supported the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967 and East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. His delegation called on the international community to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to stop exploiting, depleting and endangering natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan. His delegation condemned any targeting of civilians and the perpetration of acts that violated international law and international humanitarian law. It called for the protection of all civilians, an immediate ceasefire and the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. Attempts to displace Palestinians from the northern Gaza Strip were in flagrant violation of international law and article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

64. His delegation reiterated its rejection of attempts by the occupying Power to change the legal, natural or demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, and regarded Israeli measures to consolidate its control of the Golan to be illegal, null and void. The Republic of Yemen firmly supported the right of the Syrian Arab Republic to full return of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967 on the basis of the terms of reference of the peace process and the relevant international resolutions. He called on the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to

take immediate measures to stop the military escalation and end the siege against the Palestinian people.

65. **Ms. Cao Liwen** (China) said that blockade and military occupation had pushed Palestine to the brink of collapse. Millions of Palestinians lived in misery. Even as the Committee was meeting, a new round of escalation was causing massive civilian casualties and further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. For Palestinians, the question was no longer about the Sustainable Development Goals, but about life and death.

66. At the root of the Palestinian question was the unfulfilled aspiration of the Palestinian people for their own State and the unrectified historical injustice they had suffered. The two-State solution was the only way for the Middle East to achieve true peace and create an environment conducive to development. Over the years, China had provided assistance to help Palestinians overcome their humanitarian situation and push forward their development. The Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Development Initiative: building on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for stronger, greener and healthier global development, all proposed by China, contained ideas that could be helpful in addressing the Palestinian issue.

67. **Mr. Van Schalkwijk** (South Africa) said that his delegation extended condolences to the families of the victims of the preceding week's escalation and called for restraint and the opening of humanitarian corridors. The recent upheaval was the result of the ongoing occupation, settlement expansion, desecration of holy places and apartheid practices described in the ESCWA report. South Africa condemned the violence against civilians in both Gaza and Israel, as well as Israeli violations of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law by targeting civilian infrastructure and cutting off food, water, electricity and fuel. South Africa called on Israel to heed the Secretary-General's call to comply with international humanitarian law and permit aid to enter Gaza. It also called for the release of the Israeli hostages taken into Gaza.

68. The region was in desperate need of a credible peace process that would establish a viable, contiguous Palestinian State existing side-by-side in peace with Israel within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. United Nations resolutions and international law mattered. The international community had an obligation to act. His delegation called for urgent attention to resolve the final-status issues, including borders, the status of Jerusalem, the release of political prisoners and the right of return.

69. **Mr. Ghuwar** (Libya) said that to understand the recent events, one had to go all the way back to 1948, when the Palestinian people were first displaced. Palestinians had the same right under international law and the Charter of the United Nations to defend their land as any other people. Libya supported Arab and international resolutions in that regard and upheld the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

70. His delegation condemned the Israeli entity's attack on the Gaza Strip, the brutal siege it was imposing on Gaza's 2 million residents and its attempt to displace the population in a repetition of what had occurred in 1948. Israeli targeting of defenceless civilians, medical teams and journalists rose to the level of war crimes. The international community needed to fulfil its moral obligation to end the suffering, abandon its double standard and require strict compliance by all parties with international resolutions and international humanitarian law. His delegation called for an immediate ceasefire, an end to war crimes and the delivery of humanitarian aid. It cautioned against any efforts to displace Palestinians from their land.

71. **Mr. Ekren** (Türkiye) said that his delegation condemned the loss of civilian lives in the recent escalation and called on all parties to show restraint. The scope of the damage to civilian infrastructure was a matter of increasing concern. International humanitarian law and international human rights law needed to be respected. Türkiye was engaged in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the tension and respond to urgent humanitarian needs. The recent events had shown once again that lasting peace and security in the Middle East could only be achieved through a two-State solution with an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions.

72. **Mr. Abdelaal** (Egypt) said that Egypt would continue to be in contact with all parties with a view to containing the recent unprecedented escalation. The siege of Gaza needed to come to an end and humanitarian aid should be allowed in. Further bloodshed should be avoided and the current situation should not be allowed to inflame the entire region.

73. Gazans had for decades been living under catastrophic economic, social and humanitarian conditions. The international community should pressure Israel to desist from colonial practices that included land annexation, home demolition and denial of access to resources, particularly in area C. The Israeli side needed to settle outstanding economic issues with

the Palestinian Authority that had not been resolved by bilateral negotiations or within mechanisms such as the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians. Persons and goods should be allowed to move freely in both the West Bank and Gaza. An end should be put to all Israeli practices that conflicted with Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and such international instruments as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

74. The ESCWA report highlighted the effects of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. The Palestinian issue could not be solved by military means or displacement to neighbouring States. The only solution was the establishment of an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions and the agreed terms of reference, especially the Arab Peace Initiative.

75. **Mr. Dioum** (Senegal) said that his delegation wished to express its sorrow over what was occurring in Palestine and the occupied territories. The high number of casualties on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides was due to the failure of the international community to resolve the long-running conflict. All violations of human rights should be condemned regardless of the perpetrators or the victims. The Fourth Geneva Convention required the occupying Power to treat occupied peoples humanely and protect them against acts of violence or threats. Senegal called for a return to negotiations and an end to war. The solution lay in the establishment of an independent Palestinian State living side by side with Israel, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

76. What was happening in Palestine and the occupied territories was a violation of international instruments and norms, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Siege, collective punishment, displacement and denial of access to natural resources made sustainable development impossible. Restrictions on Palestinians' access to their own fields and water sources had contributed to some 38 per cent of Palestinian households living under conditions that were determined to be "catastrophic", "extreme" or "severe" in 2022. Settlement expansion, home demolitions and restrictions on movement undermined the prospect of establishing a contiguous, independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State.

77. His delegation reaffirmed Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council had 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. Sustainable development depended on security, stability and peaceful coexistence. To that end, Senegal called for compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, dialogue and support for UNRWA.

78. **Mr. Weinstein** (United States of America) said that it was important to remember how the current situation had started. The United State condemned the appalling attack on Israel by Hamas terrorists from Gaza and urged other States to do the same. The attacks were pure evil and had evoked painful memories of antisemitism. United States citizens were among those killed and those being held hostage.

79. The United States would provide Israel with everything it needed to defend itself against terrorism in accordance with the rule of law and the law of war. Democracies distinguished themselves from terrorists by the higher value they placed on human life and human dignity. Countries like the United States and Israel did not deliberately target civilians. By contrast, the Hamas terrorists had brutally attacked civilians, from babies to ageing Holocaust survivors. It was they who had brought the tragic war to the Gaza Strip. Israel had not only the right, but the duty to defend itself.

80. The United States extended its condolences to the Israeli, Palestinian and American victims and their families. It was working to address the tragic humanitarian consequences that the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel had spawned for civilians in Gaza. All parties must comply with international humanitarian law. The United States was actively engaged with Israel, other countries in the region and the United Nations to provide assistance. Civilians were not to blame for Hamas terrorism and were protected under the laws of armed conflict. While all recognized the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, it was important to remember that Hamas did not represent those aspirations and offered nothing to Palestinian but more bloodshed.

81. **Mr. Laghdaf** (Mauritania) said that his delegation shared concerns over Israeli exploitation of Palestinian natural resources and the damage being done to Palestinian agriculture and infrastructure. Palestinians were being cut off from water and electricity. The illegal settlements had damaging effects on all aspects of Palestinian life. Even as the Committee was meeting, Palestinians were seeing defenceless women and children killed, property destroyed and attempts to

displace the population in violation of international law and norms. His delegation called for an immediate end to the bloodshed, urgent delivery of assistance and serious action towards a two-State solution in accordance with international resolutions.

82. **Ms. Wood** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom condemned the terrorist acts perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli citizens and other nationals. It expressed condolences for the deaths of Israeli and Palestinian civilians. The actions of Hamas had led to the exacerbation of an already dire humanitarian situation.

83. Israel had a legitimate right to defend itself proportionately and take action against terrorism in line with international law. All possible measures must be taken to minimize civilian casualties and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, including food, water, fuel and medical supplies. Her country was working with international partners to prevent the situation from spreading and causing wider instability. The international community needed to intensify efforts to break the cycle of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

84. **Ms. Bryant** (Australia) said that her delegation felt compelled to intervene because many of the statements being made had focused inordinately on Israel and ignored the responsibility borne by Hamas. As always, her country called for protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law. Australia unequivocally condemned the actions of Hamas and called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held in Gaza. There was no justification for the Hamas terrorist attack, and Israel had a right to defend itself.

85. The Hamas attack had pushed the two-State solution even further out of reach. Australia mourned the innocent lives lost on all sides. It was providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza through trusted partners and supported the work of the United States and Egypt to establish a humanitarian corridor.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.