



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 October 2024

Original: English

2025 session

25 July 2024–30 July 2025

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 4 September 2024, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Rae (Canada)

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24-16050 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 1: Election of the Bureau (continued)

1. **The President** said that the election of a Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council for its 2025 session had been postponed from July 2024. He had been informed that the candidacy of Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) had been endorsed as Vice-President of the Council for the 2025 session.

2. *Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) was elected Vice-President by acclamation.*

Agenda item 17: 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 the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/79/187–E/2024/68)

3. **Mr. Alami** (Director of the Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), presenting the ESCWA 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 the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/79/187–E/2024/68), said that unprecedented death and destruction was occurring in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. Although the reporting period had ended on 31 March 2024, the war was ongoing and its current impact was now significantly greater.

4. **Ms. Abushawesh** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the title of the ESCWA report failed to capture the catastrophe unfolding in Palestine. For years, the Council had been receiving detailed updates on the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian life, transforming Gaza into the world's largest open-air prison in what the Secretary-General had described as a "hell on Earth". That dark reality, including the genocide in Gaza, required the international community to confront its collective humanity and the integrity of its commitments to human rights, international law and the pledges to leave no one behind.

5. The ongoing genocide in Gaza was the latest manifestation of a colonial settler occupation that had oppressed the Palestinian people through decades of dispossession, occupation, blockade, apartheid and a genocidal campaign with no end in sight. In the past 11 months, at least 41,000 Palestinians had been killed and nearly 100,000 injured, most women and children. Millions had been forcibly displaced, and the scale of destruction was at a level not since the Second World War.

6. Israel had left nearly 40 million tons of debris as well as unexploded ordnance that would take 15 years to clear. Most schools and nearly all universities in Gaza had been damaged or destroyed, leading to the total annihilation of education in a crime termed "scholasticide" by special rapporteurs. The environment, biodiversity and agricultural lands had been irreversibly damaged and natural resources were being blatantly exploited in an act of ecocide aimed at perpetuating the forced displacement of Palestinians by making Gaza unliveable.

7. There could be no sustainable development without justice in Palestine, and no justice could be achieved without addressing the repercussions of the Israeli occupation throughout Palestine. The Council and the international community must take decisive action to confront the occupation and uphold shared commitments to justice and sustainable development.

8. Reaffirming the gratitude of Palestinians for the long-standing support of the international community, she called upon all States and organizations to uphold their

legal obligations to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians and assist them in realizing their rights. A commitment to accountability was required to end Israeli impunity and violations. Without decisive action, the United Nations and the international community risked leaving entire generations behind. The time for action was now.

9. **Mr. Shrier** (United States of America) said that the United State had long expressed its strong concerns about United Nations resolutions under the present item potentially perpetuating anti-Israel bias and appreciated that such resolutions had not been reintroduced at the current session.

10. The United States reaffirmed the urgency of ending human suffering in Gaza. Implementing a ceasefire and hostage release deal consistent with Security Council resolution [2735 \(2024\)](#) was the best way to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis and others awaiting the return of their family members. The United States appreciated the Secretary General's condemnation of the attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and his call for the release of all hostages. All Member States should do the same.

11. The President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden, had acknowledged the heartbreak experienced by both Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the conflict. The United States was working with Qatar and Egypt on a deal to save lives, bring relief to Gaza, secure the return of hostages and de-escalate regional tensions.

12. The United States was working with Israeli authorities to expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza and was helping to arrange a polio vaccination campaign there, with hundreds of thousands of vaccines already administered. He reiterated the importance of providing United Nations and non-governmental organization personnel with the safety and space needed to inoculate at-risk populations in Gaza.

13. The United States appreciated the Secretary General's commitment to providing humanitarian and development assistance. It called upon United Nations and humanitarian agencies to prepare to surge assistance into Gaza in the event of a ceasefire and upon all Member States to fund the work of humanitarian organizations there.

14. The United States called for an end to actions in the West Bank that could escalate tensions and to attacks by extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians. Moreover, Israel must release all owed Palestinian Authority tax revenues. The settlement programme of Israel was inconsistent with international law and detrimental to the prospects of a two-State solution.

15. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that the Government of Colombia reiterated its rejection of civilian harm in conflict and emphasized the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law. It reminded all States of their obligation to comply with Security Council decisions, pursuant to Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in line with Security Council resolution [2728 \(2024\)](#).

16. The situation in the Gaza Strip showed that violence affected all civilians, in particular vulnerable groups such as children, older persons, women and persons with disabilities. Colombia reiterated its call for negotiations leading to a ceasefire that would ensure the release of hostages, the end of civilian suffering and compliance with international law. A two-State solution was the only way to guarantee the right of Israel and Palestine to coexist peacefully within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

17. Colombia supported the lawsuit filed by South Africa against Israel in the International Court of Justice and welcomed the Court's advisory opinion, in which

it ordered Israel to take measures to prevent genocide in Gaza and indicated the need for a ceasefire to bring about the release of hostages.

18. **Ms. Sari** (Türkiye) said that the ESCWA report served to highlight violations by Israel of international humanitarian and human rights law, with a focus on the social and economic conditions of people living under occupation. Her delegation commended the inclusion a gender perspective.

19. Türkiye expressed deep concern over the ongoing deadly conflict in the Gaza Strip, and the situation in other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained immensely concerning. The expansion by Israel of illegal settlements, demolitions, forced evictions, mass displacements and extrajudicial killings were the causes of the cycle of violence. The risk of violence and escalation would persist until the illegal occupation ended.

20. In an advisory opinion supported by Türkiye, the International Court of Justice had confirmed that Israel pursued a policy of occupation and persecution against Palestinians and must end its presence in Palestinian territories and make reparations. The international community must take a firm stance against the illegal practices of Israel.

21. **Ms. Jiménez de la Hoz** (Spain) said that almost a year had passed since the Hamas terrorist attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Gaza war, with no ceasefire in sight. The ESCWA report served to highlight the economic and humanitarian consequences in Gaza, with half of the infrastructure damaged, almost all water unusable and one in four people facing starvation. The situation was equally alarming in the West Bank, with military incursions, settler violence and settlement expansion continuing to violate international law, hinder the two-State solution and obstruct peace.

22. Expressing fear that conditions had worsened since the drafting of the ESCWA report, she said that an immediate and lasting ceasefire was essential to ensure the release of hostages and the entry of humanitarian aid. In that context, Spain commended the vital work of United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As the Chair of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, Spain would promote the implementation of recommendations of the independent review to ensure adherence by UNRWA to the humanitarian principle of neutrality and would strengthen its humanitarian and stabilization work. A unified government under the Palestinian Authority supported by the international community was needed for stabilization, reconstruction and reform.

23. The consequences of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people must be analysed in the light of the advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 of the International Court of Justice, which had determined that the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory did not conform to international law and had called for their cessation and for reparations.

24. To contribute to the realization of the two-State solution and to bring about peace and dignity for the Palestinian people, Spain had recognized the State of Palestine on 28 May 2024 and had proposed an international peace conference as a framework for moving forward.

25. **Ms. Košir** (Slovenia) said that the ESCWA report was a stark reminder of the devastation wreaked by the war in Gaza and violence in the West Bank on the Palestinian people. The reporting period had been the deadliest in the history of the conflict, with an unprecedented number of civilians in Gaza displaced and tens of thousands wounded without proper medical care.

26. Slovenia reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the full respect of Security Council resolutions, provisional orders of the International Court of Justice and international law. Civilians had borne the brunt of the war, with damage and destruction in the health sector, education and critical infrastructure. Providing humanitarian aid and ensuring shelter for displaced civilians were imperative. Slovenia also reiterated its call for an end to operations in the West Bank, noting the ESCWA report's depiction of long-standing human rights violations and abuses there.

27. Israel's military occupation continued to have a detrimental effect on living conditions in the occupied territories, with social and economic impacts connected to the political issues. The International Court of Justice was clear that the continued presence of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was unlawful and must end promptly.

28. Slovenia firmly believed that only immediate steps towards a two-State solution would provide a path to peace and prosperity in Israel, Palestine and the broader region. It praised the work of the United Nations, including UNRWA, and called for full cooperation with the United Nations system.

29. **Mr. Miller** (Observer for Israel) said that the ESCWA report was deeply flawed and biased, disregarding information that would present a more accurate picture. While the report included reference to the most horrific terror attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023, with 1,200 people killed and 250 kidnapped, there was little acknowledgement of the responsibility of Hamas for the situation in Gaza. Some 101 hostages, including young children and older persons, were still being held, and six hostages had recently been murdered after surviving 330 days in hellish captivity.

30. Israel had been forced into the war against Hamas. There was no mention in the ESCWA report of the practice of Hamas using civilians as human shields or storing weapons in schools, hospitals and mosques. The repeated warnings of Israel to the United Nations about that practice had been ignored for years. The ESCWA report also contained no mention of the extensive efforts made by Israel with international partners to support and aid the Palestinian people.

31. Israel expressed great regret over accidents that had taken the lives of aid workers. Humanitarian efforts were supported to ensure the protection of aid workers. Contrary to the assertions in the ESCWA report, aid comprising food, water, shelter, equipment and medical supplies had been delivered to Gaza during the reporting period. Some aid had not reached Gazan civilians because Hamas repeatedly looted shipments.

32. Moreover, Hamas frequently launched rocket attacks against the main aid crossing, Kerem Shalom, to create headlines about aid shortages. However, there was no reference to those acts in the ESCWA report. While details of damage to health facilities had been included, the fact that many such facilities continued to be used as terror headquarters was not mentioned. Israel supported the establishment of field hospitals and mobile clinics.

33. The Palestinian Authority must not turn a blind eye to the acts of Hamas and others should consider whether those acts had benefited Palestinians. The United Nations had become captive to a narrow political agenda. Expressing hope that other delegations could see that one-sided narratives could not have a positive outcome, Israel would continue to take a principled stand within the United Nations and beyond.

34. **Mr. Al Nahhas** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the ESCWA report affirmed each year that the occupation by Israel of the Syrian Golan and the Palestinian territory had harmful repercussions for the socioeconomic development

of those areas and their populations. The latest report included reference to genocide by the Israeli forces against Palestinians, with shocking statistics covering only six months that demonstrated the violation by the occupying entity of all international laws and norms.

35. The chapter on the occupied Syrian Golan was shorter than in previous years. His delegation reiterated the importance of paying due attention to that area in future ESCWA reports, with more extensive coverage of the socioeconomic repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the Arab Syrian population there.

36. The number of Israeli settlers in the occupied Syrian Golan now accounted for almost half of the population, which was part of a plan to change the demography of the area and double the number of settlers by 2027. Israel incentivized settlements, limited the access of Syrian farmers to water and land and coerced young people into applying for Israeli nationality by restricting their work and education opportunities and their movement and dispossessing them.

37. On 27 July 2024, a crime committed by the occupying Israeli forces in Majdal Shams had resulted in the deaths of 12 children and injuries to civilians. His delegation condemned that act and reaffirmed that the people of Golan were Arab and Syrian citizens who would always retain their national identity and reject the occupation by Israel. He called upon the Council to stop the looting by Israel and to return the natural resources to the Syrian and Palestinian populations.

38. He reiterated the importance of implementing United Nations resolutions to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. The Syrian people in Golan had faced the brutal annexation and were steadfast in aspiring only to live for and return to the Syrian Arab Republic. His country pledged to continue to use all means permitted under international law to liberate the Golan up to the borders of 4 June 1967.

39. **Mr. Andreev** (Observer for the Russian Federation) said that his delegation found the conclusions in the ESCWA report alarming and shocking, in particular in relation to the suffering of Palestinian women and children. It was especially concerned about the hunger, violence, destruction of infrastructure, detention of civilians, expropriation of property and continued settlement activity.

40. The Russian Federation opposed terrorism in all its forms and condemned the terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October 2023. However, what was happening in Gaza was the unacceptable collective punishment of the civilian population despite calls by the Security Council for a ceasefire and humanitarian access. The ongoing military operation of Israel did not spare civilians, humanitarian or medical workers or volunteers.

41. Reports of the first cases of polio among Palestinian children in 25 years were very concerning. United Nations agencies had managed to deliver the necessary medicines, and a vaccination campaign for children was under way. He called upon the international community to do everything possible to prevent the spread of polio in Gaza.

42. While ensuring polio vaccinations, providing humanitarian assistance and safeguarding civilians and humanitarian workers were all crucial, the establishment of an immediate and lasting ceasefire was the only way to prevent an apocalypse that could inflame the entire region.

43. **Mr. Dharmadhikari** (France) said that his country opposed any Israeli occupation of Gaza and condemned the settlement policy of Israel in the Palestinian territories, which violated international law and impeded the two-State solution. The prolonged occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan harmed their economic and social development.

44. France was alarmed by the consequences of operations by Israel in the northern West Bank for the Palestinian population and civilian infrastructure and condemned ongoing settler violence against Palestinian civilians. As the occupying Power, Israel was obliged to protect the Palestinian population.

45. The situation in Gaza was untenable for Palestinian civilians. France called for an end to the war and for full humanitarian access in accordance with Security Council resolutions [2712 \(2023\)](#) and [2720 \(2023\)](#) and international humanitarian law. Supporting mediation efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar, France called upon the parties to make the necessary compromises for a ceasefire so that aid could be delivered and all the hostages released. France reiterated its ongoing commitment to the security of Israel and condemned the attacks, violence and assassinations committed by Hamas.

46. The two-State solution was the only way to guarantee regional stability and security. It was important to work towards a viable, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State, a process in which the Palestinian Authority had a central role. France continued to work with its partners to prevent regional escalation in the face of rising tensions in the Middle East.

47. **Mr. Ben Naftaly** (Observer for Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was puzzled at the mention by the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic of a rocket attack on Majdal Shams on 27 July 2024, in which Hizbullah, Tehran's Ayatollah regime outpost in Lebanon, had murdered 12 innocent children and wounded 44 others. It was a massacre that had crossed all red lines, and Israel would exercise its duty of self-defence.

48. The international community must place the overall responsibility for the Majdal Shams massacre on the Ayatollah regime, implement crippling sanctions, designate both the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hizbullah as terrorist organizations and hold Hizbullah responsible for massacring children. Meanwhile, the escalation at the northern border of Israel continued. Israel was not interested in a war in the north, but could not act as though the massacre had not happened and would not return to the situation before 7 October 2023.

49. On 30 July 2024, Israel had conducted a precise strike against Fouad Shukur, a Hizbullah senior military commander and a terrorist responsible for the Majdal Shams attack. Hizbullah was officially recognized as a terrorist organization by more than 20 countries. It was responsible for deadly terror attacks in Lebanon, Israel and around the world. Shukur had himself been personally responsible for a 1983 terror attack in Beirut in which over 300 people had been killed, including 241 United States military personnel.

50. Israel called for the full implementation of Security Council resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) and the withdrawal of Hizbullah beyond the Litani River. The Ayatollah regime must be pressured in order to restrain its proxy. Hizbullah was to blame for the growing suffering of Lebanese citizens from the violent takeover of Lebanon, a sovereign State, by terrorist organizations.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.