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Chairperson: Ms. Santizo-Sandoval (Vice-Chairperson) (Guatemala)

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In the absence of Ms. Lintonen (Finland), Ms Santizo-Sandoval (Guatemala), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 52: Macroeconomic policy questions
(continued)

(c) External debt crisis and development
(continued) (A/C.2/62/L.2)

Draft resolution on external debt crisis and development

1. **Mr. Ayub** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/62/L.2. He said that the draft resolution had been prepared on the understanding that, despite improvements in the situation of some developing countries, many of them were still facing difficulties in finding a durable solution to their external debt servicing obligations. The resources released under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, while welcome, were completely inadequate to enable the developing countries to realize the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Debt sustainability, in terms both of its definition and its calculation, was critical to the whole debt relief debate, and should be linked to a country's capacity to achieve its national development goals. The draft resolution sought to reflect a consensus of the wider United Nations membership, but the Group would welcome the contribution of other views.

Agenda item 41: 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/62/75-E/2007/13 and A/C.2/62/6)

2. **Mr. Al-Dafa** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) introduced the report transmitted by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/62/75-E/2007/13), as requested in General Assembly resolution 61/184.

3. The report indicated that the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel, closures within and around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, mobility restrictions and the withholding of Customs and VAT revenues had led to profound hardship for the Palestinian people. Unemployment was estimated at 30 per cent, while poverty had soared to 64 per cent overall and 88 per cent in Gaza. There was growing food insecurity and dependence on informal borrowing and aid, and all social and public health indicators revealed a decline in the standard of living.

4. The suffering of the Palestinians was exacerbated by arbitrary arrests and detentions, displacement of the population and destruction and confiscation of property. Over 9,000 Palestinian prisoners remained in Israeli prisons, and in 2006 the Israeli army had damaged 3,000 refugee shelters in the Gaza Strip and demolished 233 Palestinian structures in the West Bank. Contrary to international law, Israel continued to construct a 703-kilometre barrier, which would prevent 60,000 Palestinians from accessing the West Bank and their main source of livelihood, completely encircling 31,000 of them. Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, also deemed illegal by the international community, remained and the growth rate of the settler population was almost triple that of the general population.

5. The report used data and information from various United Nations agencies and corroborated by the Secretariat, and should be afforded serious consideration. Improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinian people would not be achieved without a comprehensive, just and sustainable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli conflicts.

6. **Mr. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) referred to a letter from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General (A/C.2/62/6), which provided complementary information for the portion of the report concerning the occupied Syrian Golan. While the Commission should continue to produce such reports, future reports should contain more detailed figures and statistics relating to Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan, and give a true picture of the realities on the ground as they affected the Syrian population there. Noting the importance of diversifying the sources upon which such reports drew, he emphasized the willingness of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to supply any information that would assist in producing a report

that would reflect in detail the situation of the Syrian population in the occupied Syrian Golan.

7. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine) asked whether it would be possible for the report of the Commission to provide numbers and statistics with respect to Israeli practices in the earlier years of the 40-year occupation, and to have such numbers clustered in tables or matrices, so that the report would clearly demonstrate the cumulative effect of the occupation, rather than the effect over just one year. In previous years, the report had been introduced in a PowerPoint briefing, including tables and photos, that had graphically illustrated the details contained in the report submitted to the Committee.

8. **Mr. Al-Dafa** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) responded that the complementary information provided by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic was covered in the report that had been submitted to the Committee.

9. The information sought by the Permanent Observer of Palestine, on Israeli practices over the past 40 years of occupation, did indeed exist and in the future could be presented in the form desired. Similarly, if a slide presentation was desired, with tables and photos, the Commission had all the information needed, would take that request into consideration and would probably be able to present the information in that form in the future.

10. **Ms. Al Mansoori** (United Arab Emirates) observed that recent international reports indicated that the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to experience a humanitarian crisis resulting from the continuing Israeli occupation and the war crimes committed by the occupying forces.

11. Israel continued to control the borders and trade routes of Palestine, restricting the movement of people and goods, separating Palestinian lands and isolating cities. In flagrant defiance of international resolutions, Israel continued its expansionist policy by persisting in the construction of the separation barrier, which the Israeli Government had decided to lengthen by an extra 33 kilometres, an extension that would cause confiscation of yet more Palestinian lands and the displacement of yet more Arab populations. Furthermore, Israel continued to confiscate Palestinian lands to construct more illegal settlements and military bases, besides levelling agricultural land, destroying

crops and irrigation networks and imposing closures and blockades. That in turn isolated and displaced thousands of individuals, preventing them from reaching their work and thus their main sources of income. In addition, Israel had been seizing water resources and contaminating the Palestinian territories with refuse and waste from the Israeli settlements.

12. Economic and humanitarian conditions were deteriorating, with a sharp increase in poverty and unemployment, especially in the Gaza Strip, owing to Israel's policy of continued closures and its refusal to commit to the implementation of the agreement on transportation and passage concluded with the Palestinians in 2005. Furthermore, Israel continued to confiscate lands in the occupied Syrian Golan and to build more illegal settlements, to seize water resources there, to increase measures to Judaize the area and to impose a policy of discrimination and oppression against the Arab population.

13. The United Arab Emirates reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and Government, supporting their right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. It awaited with interest the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East, hoping that it would reach a permanent, comprehensive and just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects, with the participation of all the parties involved.

14. The United Arab Emirates urged the international community to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to implement all international resolutions affirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to their natural resources and calling on Israel to refrain from exploiting, endangering or depleting such resources. It further urged the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to compel Israel to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people and Arab populations and their property, immediately to resume the peace negotiations according to the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map, both of which called for a comprehensive freeze on the building of settlements, dismantling of all outposts and the establishment of an independent, contiguous, viable Palestinian State.

15. The United Arab Emirates continued to support the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people through financial assistance, having contributed to the

reconstruction of what Israel had destroyed, including residential areas, schools, mosques, universities and hospitals. It called upon the international community and relevant international financial institutions to resume the provision of assistance to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people to enable them to meet their basic living requirements until a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement was reached.

16. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), noting that sovereignty over natural resources was an issue of particular significance to the Palestinian people, recalled that the General Assembly in resolution 1803 (XVII) referred to permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources as a “basic constituent of the right to self-determination”.

17. For forty years, Israel had implemented a systematic and deliberate policy based on the illegal exploitation, diversion and degradation of Palestinian land and other natural resources. The Palestinians watched as their drinking water was diverted to slake the thirst of armed and hostile illegal settlers while they themselves went thirsty and their agricultural produce withered. Such a dangerous policy gravely violated Israel’s obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the applicability of which had been reaffirmed in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004.

18. In its July 2007 report, entitled “The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and Other Infrastructure in the West Bank”, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provided a shocking depiction of the outcome of Israel’s destructive policies and practices. According to that report, 40 per cent of the West Bank was now exploited by the occupation authorities for Israeli-only infrastructure. That exclusive infrastructure had been illegally built on occupied Palestinian land confiscated for the benefit of the occupier and its illegal armed settlers, and comprised, for example, an entire network of Israeli-only roads and an extensive system of military checkpoints that isolated Palestinian communities, denying them access to proper health and education services.

19. Israel also continued to construct the illegal wall in the West Bank, in violation of the advisory opinion

of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004 and General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004. When completed, the illegal wall would be 703 kilometres long, creating disconnected enclaves containing 260,000 Palestinians — 11 per cent of the Palestinian population. Furthermore, 80 per cent of the wall would lie within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, isolating 575 square kilometres of the West Bank between itself and the Green Line, in what was termed the “seam zone”.

20. Nor had Palestine’s agricultural sector been spared from the ravages of Israeli occupation. At least 230 square kilometres of the West Bank’s most fertile land had already been confiscated for the purpose of constructing the illegal wall. In the past seven years alone, the Israeli occupation regime had confiscated 254,933.6 dunums, razed 74,755 dunums, and uprooted over a million trees, markedly changing the topography and flora of Palestine.

21. The encroachment of Israel on the natural resources of the Palestinian people was not confined to illegal confiscation of fertile land and aquifers, but extended also to environmental pollution and degradation. Israeli occupation authorities had used Palestinian land as dumping grounds for the untreated sewage and other waste from the illegal Israeli settlements and the hundreds of chemical factories they had established in flagrant violation of international environmental law, especially the 1989 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

22. The Palestinian people could not work towards a future of freedom and self-determination when they saw their land and natural resources exploited and abused by the ruthless occupation. If the Israeli violations of the Palestinian people’s sovereignty over their natural resources continued, a viable Palestinian State would become an impossible goal, notwithstanding eloquent professions of a desire for peace and a commitment to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

23. In that regard, some statements delivered by representatives of the occupying Power before the Committee were misleading. The occupying Power actually professed to seek cooperation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and in applying technology for development, while its actions on the

ground represented one nation's advancement at the expense of another's resources and future viability.

24. There would be some voices alleging that his factual outline of the situation was politicized, was not proper for discussion by the Committee and was counterproductive to ongoing bilateral peace efforts. Palestine adamantly disagreed with those allegations, which were themselves political in nature. The description he had given did not contain abstract numbers, but represented facts on the ground that directly threatened the lives, livelihoods and living standards of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Palestinians. If those facts were not to be addressed within the Committee, how else were the Palestinians to defend their right to protect their natural resources from violation? Unless the Palestinian people's right to sovereignty over their natural resources were safeguarded, by ending the illegal and destructive practices of the Israeli occupier, there could be no chance of peace. The members of the Committee had a legal and moral obligation to protect the rights of all peoples to sovereignty over their natural resources and it was truly to be hoped that the rights of the Palestinian people would not be the lone exception.

25. **Mr. Tharyat** (Indonesia) said that, while the rest of the world was preoccupied by development and especially the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the Palestinians were continuing their daily struggle just to survive. The Millennium Development Goals were the right of all, but could not be achieved by a people whose attention was focused on escaping violence and whose right to a homeland was not fully respected.

26. The prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory by Israel continued to worsen the economic and social hardships faced by the Palestinians, especially women and children, whose access to health and educational services, employment, markets and humanitarian assistance was severely restricted. Arbitrary arrests and detentions, population displacement, property destruction and confiscation, restricted access to natural resources, and water and environmental degradation caused great harm to any development effort. Public health services and food security were greatly deficient.

27. The national unity and territorial integrity of the Palestinian people had to be maintained. There had to be guaranteed freedom of movement of persons and

goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and a removal of restrictions on entering and leaving East Jerusalem and on movement to and from the outside world. The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources had to be fully respected. A peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the prolonged conflict in the Middle East was urgently needed. Member States should devote themselves to peace in the Middle East and the creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

28. His Government was committed to helping to end the protracted and bitter conflict that had long been a burden on all parties involved. He hoped that multilateral efforts, including those of the Security Council, the Quartet and the Arab League, could contribute to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003), the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace, and the Arab Peace Initiative. At the same time, the United Nations and its agencies were essential to the efforts to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people.

29. Indonesia was willing to collaborate with the international community in building the Palestinians' capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

30. **Mr. Razali** (Malaysia) recalled that the General Assembly had reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources and had called on Israel not to exploit, to cause loss or depletion of or to endanger those natural resources. The General Assembly had also recognized the Palestinians' right to restitution if those resources were damaged. Israel's unjust exploitation of the natural resources of the occupied territories and its actions had caused land degradation and water resource damage, including water pollution and a severe water crisis. Essential infrastructure work supported by the international aid community had also ground to a halt due to Israeli actions. His delegation called for action to be taken by the international community to ensure the discontinuance of that most unacceptable state of affairs.

31. Malaysia continued to be deeply concerned at the difficult living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan caused by the continued Israeli occupation. The Israeli belligerent attitude towards the Palestinian people in the occupied territory and the Arab population in the Syrian Golan had to cease immediately, as did the total disregard for international law, conventions and United Nations resolutions and calls by the international community. The international community should not allow Israel to continue to use violence on the Palestinian civilian population and civilian infrastructure and strangle the economic livelihoods of the Palestinians. Indiscriminate Israeli military action to arrest or kill Palestinians should not be allowed. Israel should immediately discontinue and reverse the construction of the illegal separation wall on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, heeding the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the international condemnation. The Israeli Government should not support or encourage illegal Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel should honour and observe international law and norms and obligations as the occupying Power.

32. The report clearly described the appalling living conditions of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation: extreme poverty, in shelters or homes under threat of imminent destruction, with unmet basic needs and a lack of medical services, deteriorating health conditions, disrupted education, lack of employment and in constant fear for their lives. The dignity of the Palestinian people and their basic right to live as decent human beings were being taken away by the occupying Power, while the international community remained indifferent to the tragedy.

33. Having been created by a United Nations resolution, Israel had to be held responsible for all its offences in accordance with the norms of international practice and law. It could not continue to act with impunity and total disregard for the demands of the international community. Israel should cease its extrajudicial killings, excessive use of force, and other practices such as destroying civilian infrastructure, economic resources, social goods and individual homes, which violated its obligation as an occupying Power to protect the civilian population. The United Nations should ensure that Israel met its responsibilities as a Member State of the United Nations. Continued acquiescence in Israeli actions

would be interpreted as promoting double standards in terms of international practice.

34. Unfortunately, despite years of discussion, no progress had been made towards a just and durable solution for returning to the Palestinian people their inalienable right to a sovereign State. In fact, the year 2007 marked 40 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and 50 years that the issue of Palestine had been on the agenda of the United Nations. The international community had to take the responsibility of acting to restore the rights of the Palestinian people, so that they could live in dignity in their own sovereign State.

35. **Mr. al-Hababi** (Qatar) said that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution was urgently needed to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian issue had remained on the United Nations agenda for more than 50 years, carried over from one century to another.

36. The occupying forces flouted international law and United Nations resolutions and pursued a policy of violence and oppression while claiming the right to self-defence against activists resisting foreign occupation. Unfortunately, the double standards of the Security Council encouraged Israel to violate international law and resolutions with international legitimacy.

37. His country did not approve of the brutality used by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinians and the Arabs of the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel flagrantly defied the international community and international law by detaining, kidnapping and assassinating the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people and by targeting innocent people in bombings and raids on Arab cities and villages in Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel levelled occupied houses and targeted places of worship and schools and hospitals. It practised daily brutality of a kind disavowed by the vast majority of the peoples of the world and international and humanitarian organizations, as the Security Council failed in its duty to protect people. The figures cited in the report on Palestinian deaths and injuries to adults and children provided ample evidence of the brutality and included 28 deaths and 120 injuries in schools administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The report estimated that Palestinian political prisoners numbered in the thousands,

including some 120 women and more than 390 children, against more than 60 per cent of whom physical force had been used.

38. In its resolution 2006/43, the Economic and Social Commission had expressed the conviction that the Israeli occupation had gravely impeded efforts to achieve sustainable development and a sound economic environment in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and its grave concern over the formidable impact on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people caused by Israel's construction of the wall and its associated regime inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. It had also stressed that construction of the wall was contrary to international law and was isolating East Jerusalem, dividing up the West Bank and seriously debilitating to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, and called for full compliance with the legal obligations mentioned in the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and in General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. It had also reaffirmed that the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories were illegal and an obstacle to economic and social development, and called for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

39. Israel has rejected all of the Palestinian, international and regional peace initiatives. If Israel sought security, it must strive for peace. Peace and security could be achieved only through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and the numerous appeals by the Security Council and the Secretary-General asserting the full and unconditional right of the Palestinian people to the full restoration of its national legitimate rights and, primarily, the right to self-determination and to an independent State on its national soil, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 line.

40. **Mr. Shawabkha** (Jordan) said that the repercussions of the Israeli occupation went far beyond the economic and social dimensions, which were already extensive, as indicated by the report. The Israeli occupation, the illegal settlements and the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had direct negative effects on the economic and social

lives of the people under Israeli occupation. The Israeli closure system was a primary cause of poverty and humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Israeli settlements, land confiscation and the construction of a barrier were curtailing economic and social life; and refugees, women and children bore the brunt of those measures.

41. In October 1994, a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel had ended years of conflict. Jordan's views on the present item were based on its desire to achieve and maintain a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the international terms of reference of the peace process, the Arab peace initiative and the vision of a two-State solution as stipulated in the road map.

42. Unfortunately, Israeli practices had negative effects on the peace process. His delegation called on Israel to cease all settlement activities and construction of the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to return seized property and pay compensation for the damage caused.

43. **Mr. Al-Fayez** (Saudi Arabia) said that the continuous Israeli occupation of Arab lands had turned the entire region into hotbeds of violence and disorder owing to the constant suffering and despair it caused the Palestinians, also frustrating the legitimate authorities in Palestine.

44. The only cure for those grave consequences was Arab-Israeli peace, for the conflict, unmatched by any other regional crisis in its impact on world peace, had overshadowed all other issues in the region for six decades. The failure to seek a comprehensive and just solution to the struggle had resulted in extremism and terrorism that could only worsen with time. Such a situation thwarted development and reform efforts in the region, which should be playing an important cultural role rather than being preoccupied with costly strife.

45. All previous efforts had been based on partial or unilateral measures that increased the Palestinian people's suffering. Exaggerated emphasis on procedural questions, disregard for the basic issues and the absence of clearly defined steps with a balanced and binding timetable had rendered the Quartet's rapprochement efforts ineffectual, especially in the absence of neutral observers to monitor compliance and penalties for non-compliance.

46. There was a pressing need for a new vision that eliminated the obstacles of the past. In that context, the Arab peace initiative represented a historic opportunity for an earnest resumption of the peace process, since it offered all the parties concerned the possibility to negotiate on a clear basis. Saudi Arabia also welcomed the positive aspects of the invitation by the President of the United States of America to hold an international peace conference calling for an end to the occupation and the negotiation of solutions to the Jerusalem (al-Quds), border and refugee issues with a view to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State existing in peace and security side by side with Israel.

47. An opportunity for a just and comprehensive peace currently existed. The Arabs had reaffirmed their commitment to peace, and it was incumbent on the international actors to change their way of dealing with the conflict. The least one could expect from Israel was to end its inhumane treatment of the Palestinians and cease colonization activities and the building of the illegal wall, which was aimed at the unilateral establishment of new facts on the ground, in violation of international law. Such practices made it impossible for any Palestinian Government to function or convince the Palestinian people of the utility or possibility of peace. Imposing conditions on the Palestinian people under occupation while granting prerogatives to the occupation authorities could never inspire confidence in the existing peace process. The failure of each side to shoulder its responsibilities would have disastrous consequences, not merely for the region.

48. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the world was still witnessing one of the ugliest forms of foreign occupation: the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. The ESCWA report highlighted important aspects of the suffering of Palestinians and Syrians under Israeli occupation. The facts and figures in the report were shocking and reflected the barbarism of the occupation and its violations of the Geneva Conventions. The number of deaths of Palestinians as a result of Israeli military operations left no doubt that the Israeli army was committing crimes against humanity without being held accountable. In addition, there were arbitrary arrests and detentions, property destruction and confiscation, mobility restrictions and closure policies, and even restrictions on access to humanitarian assistance. The continuing construction of the barrier

and of settlements was an indication of the racial and aggressive mentality of the Israeli leaders, who did not listen to moral or humane reason.

49. Member States should familiarize themselves with the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/62/275). The last chapter of the report criticized the current role of the United Nations and the Quartet on the Palestinian issue and recommended that the United Nations should withdraw from the Quartet if the Secretary-General was unable to persuade it to carry out a number of actions that were compatible with the role of the United Nations as a guardian of international legitimacy. The Special Rapporteur had also urged the General Assembly to request the International Court of Justice to give a further advisory opinion on the legal consequences for the occupied people, the occupying Power and third States of prolonged occupation.

50. The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan was no better. The letter from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General (A/C.2/62/6) contained information on Israel's savage policies and practices.

51. Israel's provocative policy of considering the occupied Syrian Golan as "Israeli territory" was in flagrant violation of the provisions of international law and dozens of relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

52. Israel was accelerating the building of settlements near the ceasefire line and expanding settlements already built on the ruins of Syrian villages and farms, in blatant breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In education, Israel had taken over the entire process and had imposed Israeli curricula on the Syrians. With regard to water resources, Israel deprived Syrian citizens of access and then sold them water at higher prices than those paid by Israeli settlers, while continuing to dig wells on Syrian property and preventing the Syrians from digging wells.

53. Heavy taxes of up to 50 per cent of the value of the crops harvested were imposed on agricultural production, preventing the Syrians from being able to sell their crops in competition with Israeli settlers in the occupied Golan. The occupation authorities uprooted trees in order to force Syrian citizens to abandon their lands so that military camps and bases could be built there. Israel continued to bury nuclear

waste in the occupied Syrian territories, indifferent to the danger to the Golan environment and its inhabitants and to the people of the Middle East as a whole. The lives of Syrian citizens and their children in the occupied Golan were under permanent threat because of Israeli landmines in the vicinity of their villages, which had already killed 16 people.

54. The continuation of the Israeli occupation since 1967 was a blot on the conscience of the United Nations and its Member States, which were not holding the occupying Power accountable for its crimes in the occupied Arab lands. Financial and economic assistance was of no benefit if the Palestinian people were deprived by the Israeli army of their right to life.

55. The Palestinian and Syrian peoples deserved full support from United Nations Members in their struggle to defend the common human values of civilized societies: freedom, peace, equality and democracy. They were making sacrifices to fight against the distorted and inhumane values which Israel was trying to promote: intolerance, violence, war, racism, ethnic cleansing, State terrorism, occupation of the lands of others and confiscation of their property, and murder of children, women and the elderly. His delegation called on Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted under the present item as a simple expression of their objection to occupation as a principle, regardless of the occupying Power concerned.

56. **Mr. Benfreha** (Algeria) said there was no doubt that the Israeli occupation was the main cause of the worsening economic situation of Palestinians and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. Their impoverishment and the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Arab territories were part of the deliberate Israeli policy of collective punishment. There could be no development in the occupied territories unless Israel lifted its blockade against the Palestinian people and alleviated the increasingly alarming humanitarian crisis, especially in Gaza, so that they could achieve economic and social development. The occupying Power must fulfil its obligations under the Geneva Conventions and guarantee the provision of aid, humanitarian assistance and basic services. Israel continued its arbitrary detentions, disproportionate use of force, demolition of infrastructure, harsh restrictions on freedom of movement and closure of territories, thus depriving Palestinians of basic health and education services, employment and other social

activities. Israel's continued confiscation of Palestinian water and land resources for the use of its settlers, and its discriminatory prices for services in the territories, directly affected Palestinians' standard of living.

57. Israel's continuing construction of the separation wall to cut off the West Bank and isolate Jerusalem was a flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and the fundamental rules of international law and contravened the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The wall not only affected the national unity and the integrity of Palestinian territory, but also undermined normal economic and social life. Israel's blockade of trade routes breached all the rules of international trade and severely affected the economy of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the Syrian Golan. The international community must keep its promises regarding their inalienable right to their national resources, a prerequisite for development and a just and lasting peace in the region.

58. **Mr. Al-Muharraqi** (Bahrain) said that, since occupying Arab lands in 1967, Israel had continually exploited natural resources there and established settlements in violation of United Nations resolutions, especially General Assembly resolution 61/184 on the sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources, and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The illegal separation wall being built despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice aggravated the suffering of the Palestinians. As described in document A/62/75-E/2007/13, those practices and the expropriation of land isolated occupied East Jerusalem, divided the West Bank and curtailed normal social and economic life, cutting off access to main sources of livelihood, including water resources.

59. **Mr. Alahraf** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) deplored the fact that, during sixty years of occupation, the United Nations had not found a solution for the Palestinian people despite the numerous resolutions that had been adopted. The situation had become a humanitarian tragedy. The daily acts of repression committed by the Israeli occupation sought to force the Palestinian people to submit and abandon their right to self-determination and the right of return. The practices of the occupying authorities, which included the confiscation of land, the destruction of cities and houses, closures and restrictions on movement, caused economic and social suffering to the Palestinians.

60. Those activities were taking place in full view of the international community. The numbers of Palestinians killed, wounded and detained by the occupying authorities illustrated the harm that the situation caused to families. The occupying authorities continued to destroy residential areas, level farmlands and control water resources as well as confiscate land in the West Bank and Gaza; more than 110 hectares of land had been confiscated in the previous two weeks for settlements. Construction of the wall was continuing, imposing further restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and denying them access to health and education services. That construction, which continued despite the reservations of the United Nations, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and appeals from the international community, had isolated occupied East Jerusalem, partitioned the West Bank and caused more than 7,000 Palestinian families to lose their agricultural livelihood. The occupying authorities also continued to close border points, create barriers between Palestinian cities and villages and destroy Palestinian economic institutions and services, with serious repercussions on the living standards of Palestinian families and the economic situation. Unemployment in Gaza had reached 70 per cent and the poverty level 65 per cent. The Palestinian people were living under tragic circumstances because of the occupation. Refugees, in particular women and children, suffered the most, from disease, malnutrition and lack of sanitation.

61. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupying authorities still refused to allow Syrian citizens expelled in 1967 to return and continued to construct settlements, uproot trees, level land and seize resources. Such practices were a clear violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and all the United Nations resolutions affirming the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their natural resources. It was to be regretted that the assistance extended to the Palestinian people had been reduced and politicized and the humanitarian dimension ignored, further marginalizing the Palestinians and increasing their despair, while enormous military and economic assistance was granted to the occupiers.

62. His country reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinians and their need to recover their legitimate rights under international law to self-determination and to return, and called on the international community to

support those rights by condemning the illegal practices of the occupying authorities, which should be held accountable while the Palestinians should be compensated for the human, economic and social damage to all of the occupied Arab territories.

63. **Mr. Al-Sharji** (Kuwait) said that the ESCWA report unequivocally confirmed the growing economic and social suffering and the deterioration of health, in addition to the heavy loss of life among Palestinian civilians, as well as the destruction of infrastructure and construction of the separation wall that would multiply economic and social suffering in the Occupied Territories. Those acts flagrantly contravened international law and other international criteria and the relevant resolutions, as well as the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

64. The actions of the occupying Power had robbed Palestinians and the Syrian Golan Arab community of their freedom and dignity and left them lagging far behind in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Construction of the separation wall had led to internal displacement, forced many people in the West Bank to relocate and caused hundreds of Palestinians to lose their livelihoods from the land, and had deprived thousands of access to their work.

65. No one could ignore the abusive treatment of women and their suffering under the occupation, including lack of adequate medical treatment. Israel continued to violate international law through its systematic aggression, occupation and destruction of the natural resources of the occupied territories. The international community must take a firm stand in order to reach a just and comprehensive settlement that would allow Palestinians and the Syrians in the Golan to exercise all their rights.

66. **Mr. Tag-Eldin** (Egypt) said that economic and social conditions in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate as a result of the Israeli occupation. The numbers of killed, injured and incarcerated, which included women and children, were on the rise. Palestinian property continued to be destroyed and trees and crops uprooted. Israel's closure policy had contributed to high unemployment and poverty rates, while two thirds of households relied on informal borrowing to subsist. Infrastructure continued to be destroyed at an alarming rate, including the six transformers at Gaza's only electric power plant that

had been destroyed by the Israeli air force and which his country had helped to rebuild.

67. In order to build the separation barrier in the West Bank, which had been condemned by the International Court of Justice and by the General Assembly in resolution ES-10/15, Israel had confiscated land and closed off the access of Palestinians to 95 per cent of their own water by destroying wells and cisterns. In Gaza, less than half of domestic water services met acceptable quality standards, while in the West Bank, Israeli settlements directed their sewage flow on to agricultural lands of Palestinian farmers. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel had begun the construction of three new tourist settlements on the occupied Lake Tiberias lowlands and continued to expand its agricultural settlements at the expense of the production of Syrian Arab farmers.

68. Those facts and others presented in the report provided objective grounds for adopting a resolution on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. They also were cause for pessimism about the prospects for peace; that was particularly disturbing to his country, which had made such great efforts for peace in the region. But Egypt remained hopeful that, by avoiding double standards and respecting rights, peace in the Middle East could still be achieved.

69. **Mr. Fluss** (Israel) said that the issue had been politicized. It was unrelated to the Committee's competence and contrary to its working methods. The sole aim was to provide a platform for some Member States to criticize, condemn and isolate Israel. The ESCWA report was highly problematic in both content and context and stemmed from a narrow mandate that examined the impact of Israeli actions on Palestinian living conditions without examining what the Palestinians had brought on themselves through their violence and other activities that had destroyed natural resources. The report did not reflect reality and blamed Israel for the deterioration of the Palestinian economy and environment, instead of pinpointing the real cause, which had been Palestinian terrorism. Israel urged the United Nations to consider the wisdom of funding such reports that discredited the United Nations, lacked impartiality and hindered prospects for dialogue and reconciliation.

70. Many other situations in the world were at least as acute as that of the Palestinians. The *2006 Human Development Report* ranked the Palestinians at 100 out of 177 countries on the human development index. The ESCWA report was thus inconsistent with other international documents. It also focused on a plethora of political and security issues not germane to the Committee's work, including a long exposé on the security fence, linking it to closures, displacement and other allegations, without once mentioning the reason for the fence, which was Palestinian terror. The fence could stop terrorists, which the Palestinian Authority failed to do; thousands of Israelis of all denominations had been saved by the security fence. A similar fence, erected in Gaza, in accordance with the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement, had elicited no United Nations dissent and had prevented terrorist infiltration. The separation wall was essential, given the number of Israelis murdered by Palestinian terrorists.

71. Water resources in the region were a serious issue for both Israel and the Palestinians, which shared watersheds and aquifers. They were together addressing water sanitation and management, but no mention of that had been made in the report, which had instead politicized a natural resource issue. Also, the terrorist organization Hamas had been in control of the Palestinian leadership during the period considered by the report, during which time Israel could neither transfer the tax funds it collected on behalf of the Palestinians nor work with them owing to Hamas's refusal to fulfil its international obligations embodied in the Quartet principles. Not only had Israel resumed those transfers with a Palestinian Government that now met the required standards, complying with the Palestinian Authority's request regarding the remaining transfers, but the two sides were also cooperating on agriculture, exports and other economic issues, none of which had been reflected in the report.

72. Although the Palestinians' economic hardship was largely due to poor and corrupt governance, Israel wished to develop their economy and protect the region's natural resources, both of them being also in Israel's interests. The international community had supported the joint Israeli-Palestinian initiatives during the early 1990s, when the two sides had devised a plan to boost the Palestinian economy. Having, during the Oslo process, been the largest recipients of international development assistance in the world, with 90 per cent employment, the Palestinians had not

fulfilled their commitments but had opted instead for an aggressive campaign of terror against Israel in 2000. Their failure to apply the rule of law and end corruption had diminished confidence in their leadership and hopes of economic growth.

73. Both sides must work together to promote coordination and good neighbourliness. At the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians, Israel had joined other donor countries in agreeing to promote Palestinian economic development, because the Palestinians now had a Government that met the standards of the international community, accepted the Quartet principles and wished to provide a more peaceful future for its people. Lately, regular coordination meetings of the leaders of both sides on policy and the economy had created a climate of promise and hope in the region, a situation reflected neither in the ESCWA report nor in the Committee's deliberations.

74. **Ms. Rodríguez de Ortiz** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the maintenance of international peace and security required strict respect for the United Nations Charter and for human rights. Sovereignty was vested exclusively in peoples; accordingly, only the Palestinian people could determine their destiny. It was also undemocratic to criticize people's choice of leaders. Numerous United Nations resolutions had affirmed the illegality of Israel's creation of settlements in the Palestinian territory and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, which posed a serious obstacle to the attainment of lasting peace and justice in the Middle East and violated the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The Israeli army's destruction of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including homes, farms, businesses and public facilities, had humiliated the Palestinian people and must be condemned.

75. During the 40 years of its occupation, Israel had been constructing illegal settlements on Palestinian land, murdering thousands of Palestinians, destroying homes, uprooting trees, and arresting hundreds of thousands with such impunity that it repeated those acts time and again. The construction of the apartheid wall continued, with direct support from the World Bank, and separated farmers from their land, students from their schools, and workers from their jobs. It was intended to constrain and isolate the Palestinian people and consolidate Israel's expansion — despite the ruling

of illegality handed down in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice — and constituted a massive violation of virtually every human right.

76. The Palestinian economy was still in a dire state, with the suspension of salaries of workers in public and security institutions, while the Palestinian Authority's financial resources had dropped by 60 per cent in the period 2005-2006. Her country called for a comprehensive, peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and hoped that the negotiations would end in Palestinian self-determination and in peace in the Middle East, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion endorsed in General Assembly resolution 61/184.

77. **Mr. Nigor** (Sudan) said that the dramatic deterioration of Palestinian economic conditions and Israeli measures that damaged the environment and deprived Palestinians of access to water demanded international intervention. The Israeli authorities' violations affected all Palestinians, including women and children. The separation barrier, which had been ruled a violation of international human rights law by the International Court of Justice, restricted the movement of citizens. Basic services were denied to the Palestinian people and unemployment and poverty rates were high. In the Syrian Golan as well, the Israeli authorities were violating the basic rights of Arab residents, depriving them of health services and damaging the environment. His country called on the international community to protect the dignity and property of Palestinians by taking measures for the immediate cessation of those Israeli practices.

78. **Mr. Saleh** (Lebanon) said that Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territory had a dire impact on every aspect of the lives of the Palestinian people, impeding their economic and social development and irreversibly harming their environment. The many such practices included the confiscation of Palestinian lands; the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian property; the overexploitation of Palestinian natural resources; the ongoing construction of the separation wall notwithstanding the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice to the effect that the construction was contrary to international law; the establishment of new Israeli settlements and the expansion of existing ones; the uprooting of hundreds of fruit-bearing trees; the displacement of Palestinian people; and the arbitrary detention of Palestinians.

79. The water resources of the occupied Palestinian territory had been the first victim of arbitrary Israeli practices and policies, and he provided many details and statistics to substantiate that information. The international community should pressure Israel to honour its obligations under international law and respect the sovereignty of the Palestinian people over their natural resources.

80. **Mr. Al-Dafa** (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), replying to the statement by the representative of Israel questioning the accuracy of document A/62/75, said that the report had been based on confirmed information from a number of international sources. ESCWA had reviewed all the information and considered that the report reflected the reality on the ground. The Commission always endeavoured to prepare reports in the spirit of transparency and non-alignment that characterized all the work of the United Nations.

81. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli delegation continued to claim that the work of the Committee was being politicized. That was an excuse to prevent Member States from expressing their views.

82. The racist policies which Israel continued to pursue in the occupied Palestinian territories were rejected by all civilized nations. One such policy was the construction of the separation wall, which, once completed, would confine the Palestinian people to a vast jail controlled by Israel. Moreover, Israel continued to deprive the Palestinian people of all their rights and to attack their livelihoods, particularly those relating to agricultural products.

83. Such policies proved that Israel had no credibility when it professed a desire to cooperate with Member States in order to achieve development goals. Israel was promoting the adoption of a draft resolution on the use of technology in agricultural development. He urged the Committee not to support that or any similar draft resolutions sponsored by Israel, no matter which delegations cosponsored them. The Israeli representative's attempt to portray the occupation by his country of the Palestinian territories as beneficial ran counter to the facts on the ground, in particular the economic realities in those territories.

84. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli delegation's assertion that the item currently before the

Committee was unrelated to its competence and contrary to its working methods was regrettable, if not new. The facts on the ground resulted from illegal Israeli practices and ran counter to all norms and standards adhered to by the Committee and the United Nations as a whole.

85. Using terrorism as a pretext to justify the unjustifiable — including the destruction of vast numbers of homes and trees and the confiscation of large amounts of land — was a repeated tactic of the Israeli occupiers. Israel had spared no effort over the past 40 years to deprive the Palestinian people of their most basic, inalienable rights and to drive them into poverty. The Palestinian people therefore urgently required the assistance of the international community.

86. It was very surprising that Israel was using the need for security, and the construction of a security wall, as justification for committing war crimes and gross violations of international law. Such attempts had failed in the past. It was difficult to fathom how the infrastructure which the Israeli occupiers were wantonly destroying could possibly threaten the security of Israel.

87. It was misleading and offensive for Israel to suggest to the Committee that it was prepared to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, when it had kept the border crossings into the Gaza Strip closed for nearly seven years, thereby denying the population there access to basic goods. It would be highly positive if Israel demonstrated genuine goodwill by ceasing its systematic aggression against and illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Palestinian people and the destruction of their agricultural lands.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.