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I. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL APPOINTS MEMBERS OF GAZA FACT-FINDING MISSION

On 3 April 2009, the Human Rights Council announced the appointment of Richard J. Goldstone, former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and current Spinoza Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanity and Social Sciences, to lead an independent fact-finding mission to investigate international human rights and humanitarian law violations related to the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. The following are excerpts from the related press release (HRC/09/058):

The Council's President, Nigerian Ambassador Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi, today announced his decision to appoint Justice Goldstone to lead the mission, which will also include the following experts: Professor Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London; Ms. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders; and Colonel (retired from the Irish Armed Forces) Desmond Travers, member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations. The team will be supported by staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"I am confident that the mission will be in a position to assess in an independent and impartial manner all human rights and humanitarian law violations committed in the context of the conflict which took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009 and provide much needed clarity about the legality of the thousands of deaths and

injuries and the widespread destruction that occurred", Ambassador Uhomoibhi stated.

Today's appointment comes following the adoption of a resolution by the Human Rights Council at the conclusion of its special session convened on 9 and 12 January to address "the grave violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly due to the recent Israeli military attacks against the occupied Gaza Strip".

"It is in the interest of all Palestinians and Israelis that the allegations of war crimes and serious human rights violations related to the recent conflict on all sides be investigated. It is my hope that the findings of this mission will make a meaningful contribution to the peace process in the Middle East and to providing justice for the victims", Justice Goldstone stated upon his appointment.

Members of the fact-finding mission will hold a range of discussions in Geneva within the next few weeks, before departing for the region.

II. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL

On 20 April 2009, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe briefed the Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from his briefing (see S/PV.6107):

...

During this reporting period there has been very little progress on the key elements outlined in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009): the commitment of the parties to a durable and sustainable ceasefire; opening the crossings for humanitarian access and materials for recovery; and intra-Palestinian reconciliation. For the international community to sustain its commitment to a resumption of the peace process, those principles are indispensable.

While there has been a significant drop in violent incidents this reporting period, the situation remains fragile in the absence of a proper ceasefire regime. Although there were almost two weeks without violence, there were 30 rockets and mortars fired by Palestinian militants at southern Israel, and the Israeli military carried out two air strikes in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli army reported on 13 April that a Palestinian vessel laden with explosives exploded in the vicinity of an Israeli naval ship without causing injury. Egyptian efforts to combat smuggling continue, and on 15 April the Egyptian police reportedly found 900 kilogrammes of explosives along Egypt's border with Gaza. On 10 April, Egyptian security forces arrested 18 people for allegedly smuggling weapons and cash into Gaza.

The Israeli policy of near total closure of the Gaza Strip, which has been in force since the Hamas takeover in June 2007, has continued in the wake of Operation Cast Lead. Over 73 per cent of all imports during the reporting period consisted of foodstuffs and cleaning materials. Basic needs for the population, such as food and blankets, have largely been met. The strict limitation on foodstuffs and other commodities allows agencies to maintain basic relief services such as food distributions, which remain at the same levels this month as last month. The World Food Programme is reaching 365,000 beneficiaries; the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is reaching 750,000.

While we welcome the Israeli Cabinet decision to allow all kinds of foodstuffs into Gaza without restriction, we note that each individual food shipment still requires extensive coordination with the Israeli authorities. I would also note that our assistance to the people of Gaza should, of course, not be limited to food, blankets and medical supplies. Broader humanitarian assistance and early recovery are impossible without Israel providing adequate entry of fuel, cash and materials that are needed to repair schools, clinics, sanitation networks and shelters.

The total ban on the import of petrol and diesel has continued since 2 November 2008, with the exception of small quantities delivered to UNRWA. In the past month, Israel allowed the transfer of approximately half of Gaza's power plants' industrial fuel needs. As a result of the industrial fuel shortages, most Gazans continue to experience intermittent power cuts.

The ban on the import of spare parts necessary to maintain the electrical network and bring it up to full capacity exacerbates this situation. Some 10 per cent of the population remains without any electricity due to a lack of necessary materials needed to fix damage sustained to the network during Israel's military offensive. So far, only two truckloads of electrical transformers and cables have been allowed entry into Gaza since then.

Strict limitations on cash entering Gaza make many humanitarian and relief programmes impossible. On 7 April, Israel allowed in a transfer of only 50 million shekels out of 250 million requested to pay for the salaries of 60,000 Palestinian Authority staff. The total monthly cost of Palestinian Authority salaries in Gaza is 120 million shekels.

There is still limited material for network repairs. Only one truck of cement and a limited quantity of plastic piping were allowed entry into Gaza in the past month. They were used for some small-scale water and sanitation projects. The importance of improving water and sanitation is clear from clinical records at UNRWA primary health-care clinics in the Khan Younis area. Those records show that water and sanitation-related infectious diseases are increasingly prevalent in 2009 compared to the year 2008.

The lack of access to Gaza is deeply frustrating. At the 2 March donor conference hosted by the Government of Egypt at Sharm el-Sheikh, the international community pledged some \$4.5 billion for the reconstruction of Gaza. The Palestinian reconciliation process that we all hoped would provide a framework for reconstruction has not, however, moved forward. The United Nations has and will continue to support early recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza. To that end, we are working to ensure our readiness to support programming once conditions allow for it. In order to further those efforts, the Special Coordinator and his Deputy are intensifying their visits to Gaza. However, without the materials for recovery and reconstruction the process cannot begin, and that requires a substantial easing by Israel of its policy of closure of the Gaza Strip, including steps to return to the framework of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

With regard to the Gaza Board of Inquiry, on 8 April the Secretary-General received the members of the Board, who shared their conclusions and recommendations with the Secretary-General and informed him that they were still in the process of finalizing their report. He expects to receive the full report in the near future and to decide what to do at that point.

Following Prime Minister Fayyad's early resignation and the end of his Government's mandate, President Abbas asked him on 31 March to remain in office until a new Government was formed. Palestinian reconciliation talks adjourned for the third time on 2 April. While some progress was reportedly made in the talks, there has been no agreement on the

composition or political platform of a transitional Government. Talks are scheduled to resume later this month. We continue to support Egyptian efforts aimed at uniting the Palestinian factions under one Government, under the leadership of President Abbas, on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) principles.

The divide between Gaza and the West Bank continues to grow at the expense of the population of Gaza, as can be seen with health referrals outside of Gaza. As a result of the Hamas takeover of the Referral Abroad Department on 22 March, only patients with referrals approved prior to that takeover and a small number of patients whose referrals are facilitated by the Peres Center for Peace and by Physicians for Human Rights were allowed access to special medical treatment. The United Nations is actively engaged with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in Gaza to facilitate a resolution of that issue.

Five United Nations mine action teams continue to work in Gaza, conducting risk assessments and training in unexploded ordinance safety. There have been no developments regarding the location of the unexploded bombs that went missing in February 2009. A number of issues continue to await approval from the Israeli authorities, including agreement on a means by which specialized equipment can be imported into Israel. Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit remains in captivity, despite Egyptian mediation efforts to secure his release in exchange for a number of the 11,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Let me now turn to the efforts of the Palestinian Authority regarding institution-

building and security reform. The international community continues to support those efforts and plans to convene the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in the next several weeks are being discussed. During this reporting period, the Palestinian Authority has begun revising and upgrading its budget process in preparation for the 2010 budget and 2011-2013 Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including the absence of timely and predictable budget support. Despite the large sums of money pledged last month in Sharm el-Sheikh, the Palestinian Authority still has great difficulty paying monthly salaries, which severely impacts its long-term planning process and undermines the reform agenda.

On Palestinian security issues in the West Bank, the reporting period has witnessed an increase in activity by Palestinian Authority forces. They targeted criminal gangs, making a number of arrests and recovering a quantity of weapons and stolen cash, and also shut down a reported explosives manufacturing laboratory in a mosque in Qalqiliya. During the reporting period, 10 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank and 95 were injured as a result of clashes with the Israel Defense Forces and settlers. Those incidents included seven violent instances in which Israeli settlers targeted Palestinians and their property, which, however, was down from 26 such incidents in the previous period.

On 2 April, a 13-year-old Israeli was killed in an attack on a settlement, in which another Israeli child was injured. On 8 April, clashes erupted between approximately 200 Israeli settlers, some armed, and the residents of the Palestinian village of Sofa, where the killer had reportedly sought

refuge. The Israeli army intervened and 15 Palestinians were injured, including 11 by live ammunition from Israeli troops and settlers. Six other Israelis were reportedly injured during the period.

Elsewhere in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israeli settlement activity continues. Major construction work is under way in the three settlement blocs surrounding East Jerusalem to the north, east and south. In addition to the construction of housing units, road infrastructure construction is ongoing, creating further obstacles to a viable, contiguous Palestinian State. On 31 March, Israeli settlers from the Efrat settlement began their own construction of a road. As we have said repeatedly, settlement activity runs contrary to the basis of the two-State solution and must be frozen.

The number of obstacles to continued movement in the West Bank remains constant at more than 600, which continues to prevent normal social and economic life. Also in the West Bank, the barrier continues to be constructed within occupied Palestinian territory in deviation from the Green Line and contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The Government of Israel has taken no action to evacuate settlement outposts during this reporting period in accordance with its Road Map obligations.

East Jerusalem remains an issue of serious concern. Palestinian institutions there remain closed by Israeli order and

contrary to Israel's Road Map obligations. During this reporting period, Israeli authorities demolished two Palestinian structures, in addition to the so-called deterrent demolition of the family home of a Palestinian who carried out a terrorist attack against Israelis on 2 July 2008. During that demolition, a Palestinian man was shot and killed as he drove his car into Israeli security forces. Three Israeli border police were injured.

...

I cannot overemphasize the importance of addressing the situation in Gaza and of implementing the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009). Moreover, for the sake of the people of the region, there must be peace and not simply further process. We therefore encourage the early resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all core issues without exception, as agreed by the parties and as called for in resolution 1850 (2008).

The international community remains fundamentally committed to and engaged in efforts to achieve the goal of the two-State solution, the only solution aimed at guaranteeing both the security of the State of Israel and the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian State. The framework for peace remains unchanged: the establishment of two States living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the principle of land for peace and a just and comprehensive regional peace consistent with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

III. WORLD BANK ISSUES REPORT ON WATER IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 20 April, the World Bank released a report entitled, “West Bank and Gaza, Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development”. A summary of the conclusions is reproduced below (47657-GZ):

It might have been hoped that Oslo would bring water resources for a viable State under Palestinian control, that enhanced water and sanitation services would improve the living standards of the population, particularly the poor, and that water for agriculture would underpin growth. These hopes have only very partially been realized.

The causes identified in this report are failings in water resources development and management, a low and declining investment rate, and weak management of water services.

The problems that underlie these failings are clear.

- A joint governance system, with asymmetries of power and capacity, that does not facilitate rational planning and development of Palestinian water resources and infrastructure;
- An investment environment that creates huge costs and delays;
- Implementation constraints that can make the movement of even one pipe a logistical and administrative challenge;
- Weak institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority (PA) for planning, implementation and management;
- Development partnerships with donors that move uneasily between the political

context and the development challenge and are often stuck in emergency rather than strategic mode.

Essentially, integrated resource management is impossible under current conditions, and the development effort has dwindled to a series of stop-gap coping strategies that preclude rational development of the resource and the provision of quality water services to the Palestinian population.

There is also a need to work collaboratively to resolve current unsustainable water practices, particularly aquifer over-pumping and lack of pollution control, that – together with a predicted decrease in rainfall in coming decades - could compromise the welfare of future generations in this part of the world.

Clearly, the resolution of all these problems will require movement on the political front.

Reforming the way in which the Joint Water Committee and Civil Administration address Palestinian development needs is a priority until such time that the political issues are resolved in final status. The PA does, however, have a narrow margin for improvement, and there is a strong need to prioritize, especially given limited institutional capacity. What then could be priority agenda items for action in the nearer term?

One key area is strategic planning and reformulation of the investment program. A

start has been made on this, with the recent Audit of Operations and Projects, together with the Governorates Report prepared by the Palestinian Water Authority. These building blocks could form the basis for a participatory planning process involving all stakeholders, including decentralized actors, donors and NGOs.

A second key area is water supply and sanitation investment implementation, where focus could be on high priority projects that bring real benefits to the Palestinian population, particularly the poor, and notably the rural poor. Development of new sources will be a priority, and reduction of unaccounted-for water could also increase supply considerably. Wastewater projects, too, are a priority because of their high social and environmental benefit.

A third area of focus could be on irrigated agriculture, a key sector for the

revival of the Palestinian economy. Despite the major impediments described in the report, there are steps that could be taken in the nearer term, including the technology transfer agenda and the development of plans for wastewater re-use in tandem with investment in treatment.

A final area of focus could be institutional reform, to redefine sector architecture in the light of today's reality and to equip and build capacity in the agencies that have to carry the agenda forward. The challenge is not just at the top, with the PWA, but throughout the system, from the villages leagued in Joint Service Councils and on up through all the small and large service providers.

Work on these four areas could go forward whilst the larger questions of water for a viable Palestinian State are negotiated.

IV. NAM MINISTERIAL MEETING ADOPTS “DECLARATION ON PALESTINE”

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement held its Ministerial Meeting in Havana from 27 to 30 April 2009. The “Declaration on Palestine” included in the outcome documents is reproduced below (NAM 2009/MM/Doc.9):

1. The Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement considered the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the dramatic deterioration of the situation on all fronts. They stressed the importance of coordinated and principled approaches and strategies by the Movement to continue strongly supporting the Palestinian people and their leadership and underscored the need to provide both political and humanitarian support to assist the Palestinian people to

overcome the current crisis and strengthen their ongoing efforts towards the realization of their inalienable human rights and freedom. In this regard, the Ministers stressed the imperative of urgent efforts to advance a peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 425, 1397, 1515 and 1850, the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to

self-determination in their independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

2. The Ministers reaffirmed their adherence to the principled positions adopted in this regard, including in the Declarations on Palestine adopted by the Committee on Palestine in September 2006 at the XIV Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government in Havana and in July 2008 at the XV Ministerial Conference in Tehran, and the clear positions concerning Palestine adopted by all other previous Summits and Ministerial Conferences of the Movement. The Ministers called for serious, active efforts to uphold these positions and the intensification of the collective efforts by the Movement towards achievement of a just, peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine in all its aspects.

3. The Ministers expressed their deep regret that the question of Palestine remains unresolved after the passage of more than sixty years since the 1948 Al-Nakba that befell the Palestinian people, by which they became a stateless and dispossessed people, dispersed and displaced from their homeland of Palestine, and that more than half of the Palestinian people continue to live in exile in refugee camps throughout the region and in the Diaspora.

4. The Ministers also expressed their deep regret that since 1967, for more than forty-two years, the Palestinian people have continued to suffer under Israel's brutal military occupation of their land and continue to be denied their fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination and the right of the Palestine refugees to return in accordance with international law, the United Nations

Charter and relevant resolutions. The Ministers condemned Israel's continuing unlawful military occupation and expressed their grave concern about the severe oppression, hardships and affronts to human dignity being endured by the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the illegal and aggressive policies and practices being carried out by the occupying Power, including grave human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

5. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory at the political, economic, social, security, and humanitarian levels. The Ministers strongly condemned Israel's military aggressions against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, by which the occupying Power has killed and injured thousands of Palestinian civilians by, inter alia, use of excessive, indiscriminate force and extrajudicial executions and has caused vast destruction of homes, properties, infrastructure and agricultural lands. The Ministers also condemned the continuing illegal detention and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of women and children and numerous elected officials, and called for their immediate release. They condemned all Israeli settlement activities by which the occupying Power has continued to colonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of international law. They further condemned Israel's imposition of collective punishment on the Palestinian people by numerous illegal means and measures, including military reprisals, destruction of homes and properties and severe restrictions on

freedom of movement. The Ministers demanded once again that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately and completely cease all such violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, which are tantamount to grave breaches for which the occupying Power must be held accountable.

6. The Ministers condemned in the strongest terms the recent Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killing of more than 1,400 Palestinians, including hundreds of children and women, and the injury of more than 5,500 Palestinians, including by use of lethal and prohibited weaponry. They condemned Israel's wanton destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes; business properties; vital civilian infrastructure, including water, sanitation and electricity systems and roads; hospitals and ambulances; mosques; public institutions, including schools and national ministries; farms and agricultural land; and UN facilities in the Gaza Strip. They expressed their grave concern about the widespread devastation, trauma and despair caused by this military aggression among the civilian population. The Ministers demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, cease immediately its military aggression against the Palestinian people and called for respect of Security Council resolution 1860. They underscored the importance of reaching a permanent, durable ceasefire starting in the Gaza Strip and extending to the West Bank, expressing support for Egyptian efforts in this regard, as well as the necessity of allowing unimpeded humanitarian access and movement of persons and goods to meet the humanitarian, economic and recovery needs of the Palestinian people.

7. In this context, the Ministers stressed the necessity of upholding justice and international law and called upon the international community, including the Security Council, to ensure that thorough investigations are conducted of all the crimes and violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Gaza Strip. They called for serious follow-up of such investigations, aimed at holding accountable the perpetrators of such crimes and bringing an end to Israel's impunity and defiance of the law, including immediate action to follow-up the findings of the investigations by the UN Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry and the Human Right Council's fact-finding commission. The Ministers reaffirmed in this regard the obligations of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions with regard to penal sanctions, grave breaches and responsibilities.

8. The Ministers also reiterated their condemnation of Israel's inhumane and unlawful blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in the virtual imprisonment of the entire Palestinian civilian population thereby obstructing their freedom of movement, including movement of sick persons, students and humanitarian personnel; their access to aid and all essential goods, including food, medicines and fuel, construction materials and commercial flows. They expressed serious concern about the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis due to the severe impact of the blockade, which has caused grave deterioration of socio-economic conditions, including widespread poverty, unemployment, hardship, declining health conditions and decay of infrastructure and institutions in all sectors.

9. The Ministers stressed that, in addition to violating human rights law, such collective punishment measures are tantamount to grave breaches of international humanitarian law. The Ministers thus demanded that Israel cease such illegal practices against the Palestinian people and permanently end its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip by allowing for the immediate and sustained opening of all of the Gaza Strip's border crossings, in accordance with international humanitarian law, UN resolutions and the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, necessary for alleviating the humanitarian crisis and for the urgent reconstruction and economic recovery needs of the Palestinian people.

10. The Ministers reiterated their strong condemnation of Israel's continuing unlawful campaign of settler colonization in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of escalating settler violence and terror against the Palestinian civilian population. They expressed grave concern in this regard about intensifying illegal colonization activities, including vast land confiscations; construction and expansion of settlements, settlement "outposts" and infrastructure; transfer of more Israeli settlers; construction of the Wall; home demolitions; excavations and the imposition of arbitrary, racist residency and movement restrictions on the Palestinian civilian population via a permit regime and hundreds of checkpoints throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around Occupied East Jerusalem.

11. The Ministers reiterated their deep concern about the extensive physical, economic and social devastation being caused by the Israeli settlements, Wall and

checkpoints, which are severing the Palestinian Territory into separate areas, including several walled cantons; isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the Territory; displacing thousands of Palestinians from their homes; causing severe damage to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the Palestinian society; and destroying some communities in their entirety. They cautioned that this illegal colonization campaign is gravely undermining the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and jeopardizing the prospects for achieving the two-State solution for peace on the basis of the pre-1967 borders with the establishment of the sovereign, independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

12. In this regard, the Ministers expressed their grave concern in particular about the situation in and around East Jerusalem, where Israel's colonization campaign is most intense and clearly aimed at illegally altering the city's demographic composition, physical character and legal status. They condemned Israel's settlement and Wall construction, transfer of more settlers, home demolitions and excavations in and around the city, including in the area of Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) in the Old City, its continued closure of Palestinian institutions, and other measures aimed at depopulating the city of its Palestinian inhabitants and entrenching the occupying Power's unlawful control of the city. They called for urgent action to halt all Israeli colonization measures to illegally and unilaterally determine the fate of East Jerusalem, capital of the future Palestinian State.

13. The Ministers reiterated their complete rejection of and their demand that Israel

completely cease forthwith all such colonization policies and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Ministers reiterated that such aggressive, destructive and provocative policies and measures by the occupying Power constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law and flagrant defiance of UN resolutions and the 9 July 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. They stressed the incompatibility of peace process negotiations with such colonization activities deliberately aimed at the illegal acquisition and de facto annexation of more Palestinian land and forcibly imposing a unilateral solution. In this regard, they further reaffirmed the many UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions demanding the cessation of these illegal policies and practices, which deemed them to be null and void and with no legal validity whatsoever, and called for full respect and implementation of those resolutions to bring an end to Israel's illegal settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to salvage the two-State solution for peace.

14. In the face of continued Israeli defiance, the Ministers called for urgent action by the international community to compel the occupying Power to abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, UN resolutions, the Advisory Opinion and the Road Map. The Minister called on the High Contracting Parties to uphold their obligations in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention to respect and ensure respect of the Convention in all circumstances. Moreover, they reiterated their call upon Member States and the UN to uphold their obligations in accordance with

the Advisory Opinion and the demands made in resolution ES-10/15, including the obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction. They called upon the UN Security Council and General Assembly to consider further action to bring an end to the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, they called again for the expeditious operation of the "United Nations Register of Damage" and the speedy fulfilment of its mandate. The Ministers also reiterated their call for specific actions to be taken, including by legislative measures, collectively, regionally and individually, to prevent any products of the illegal Israeli settlements from entering their markets, consistent with obligations under international treaties, to decline entry to Israeli settlers and to impose sanctions on companies and entities involved in construction of the Wall and other illegal colonization activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

15. Further, in this regard, the Ministers called for application of all appropriate and available legal remedies to end the human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law being committed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to hold it accountable. They reiterated their firm conviction that respect for and compliance with international law and UN resolutions and decisions will positively influence and are necessary to advance the efforts for achieving a just, peaceful, political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

16. The Ministers reaffirmed their support for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, and emphasized the importance of maintaining and protecting the national and democratic institutions of the Palestinian Authority, including the Palestinian Legislative Council, which shall constitute a vital foundation for the future independent Palestinian State. They called for urgent efforts to rehabilitate and develop Palestinian institutions and stressed the need for mobilization of Palestinian capabilities to preserve the territorial unity and integrity of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to end the occupation and to achieve the independence of the State of Palestine. The Ministers reiterated their call for restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the events of June 2007 and stressed the importance and urgency of Palestinian reconciliation and unity. They expressed their support for Egyptian and regional efforts in this regard and their hope for speedy achievement of reconciliation, essential for the realization of the just, legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

17. The Ministers called for intensified efforts by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Quartet, to address the current political and humanitarian crisis, to ameliorate the situation on the ground and to help advance a peace process and a two-State settlement that guarantees an end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that began in 1967, and the establishment of the sovereign,

independent, and viable State of Palestine within a specified timeframe, as well as a just solution for the Palestine refugee problem on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). They stressed that such a settlement is essential for the promotion of comprehensive peace and security in the region. They called upon the Security Council, considering its Charter authority for maintenance of international peace and security, to actively engage the Quartet for advancement of such a peace settlement. They stressed in this regard the continuing relevance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map and called for its full and honest implementation. In this connection, they emphasized the importance of the timely convening of the proposed international conference in Moscow in follow-up of the Annapolis Conference.

18. The Ministers reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the UN towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all aspects on the basis of international law. In this context, reaffirming the imperative of upholding international law and the UN Charter, the Ministers reiterated their call upon the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and to act on the basis of its own resolutions to compel Israel to respect international law and to bring an end to all of its illegal practices and its occupation. The Ministers expressed appreciation to the members of the NAM Caucus of the Security Council for their efforts concerning Palestine and called upon them to continue coordination on the issue and to remain actively involved, with a view to enhancing the role played by the Movement in the international drive to achieve a just solution to the question of Palestine and lasting peace in the region as a whole.

19. The Ministers thus reaffirmed their conviction that a vital role should continue to be played by the Movement vis-à-vis the question of Palestine and entrusted the Chair, assisted by the Committee on Palestine, to lead the efforts of the Movement with regard to the pursuit of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. They stressed the importance of active contacts and dialogue by the Movement at the Ministerial level with the members of the Quartet, the members of the Security Council and other relevant parties in the peace process in order to convey the Movement's principled positions and advance efforts aimed at promoting the peace process and at ensuring respect for international law and UN resolutions, the keys to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

20. The Ministers underscored the importance of the work of non-

governmental organizations, civil society and peace groups, particularly on the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and encouraged them to continue their positive work.

21. In conclusion, the Ministers reaffirmed their long-standing, principled political support and solidarity with the just cause of Palestine, reaffirming their strong commitment to continue supporting the Palestinian people and their leadership, including by provision of assistance during this time of crisis, in contribution to the overall efforts to bring an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and to hasten the realization of a just, peaceful and permanent solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and of the right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.