



DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

**United Nations Latin American and Caribbean
Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace**

**Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Santiago, 11 and 12 December 2008**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace was held at the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, on 11 and 12 December 2008, under the auspices of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in keeping with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81. The United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace was held at the same venue on 13 December 2008.
2. The Committee was represented at the meeting by a delegation comprising Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairperson of the Committee, Hamidon Ali (Malaysia), María Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Riyad Mansour (Palestine).
3. The meeting consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. Presentations were made by 12 speakers, including 3 Israelis and 3 Palestinians. In addition, representatives of 39 Governments, Palestine, 1 intergovernmental organization, 4 United Nations system entities, 18 civil society organization and 7 media outlets participated in the meeting. At the public forum, a keynote presentation was made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, Riad Al-Malki, and other presentations were made by 10 panellists (see annex II to the present report).
4. The meeting took note of the concluding remarks by the organizers (see annex I to the present report).

II. OPENING SESSION

5. **Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in a statement read out by his representative at the meeting, **Alicia Bárcena Ibarra**, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, said that the meeting was very timely, and the international community recognized the urgent need to continue supporting the parties in their efforts to reach a comprehensive agreement on all permanent status issues. The goals of such an agreement were clear: an end to the occupation that had begun in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. He said that it was regrettable that attainment of that objective appeared unlikely before the end of the year, as had been hoped; however, what had been achieved must not be diminished.
6. He said that, while there had been some progress on the ground, much more remained to be done. Settlement expansion and construction of the barrier continued and the number of movement obstacles remained high. He called on the Government of Israel to halt the funding of settler outposts, to dismantle those built after March 2001, to completely freeze settlement activity, to open Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem and to refrain from unilateral actions in Jerusalem, such as house demolitions, which undermined trust or altered the status quo. Attacks by Israeli settlers against civilians must be stopped and properly investigated, he said. The recent deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel was a cause for serious concern. Rocket fire from Gaza continued to endanger Israeli civilians and incursions into the Gaza Strip had caused Palestinian casualties and the destruction of homes and property. He reiterated his unequivocal condemnation of rocket fire by Palestinian groups into Israel and against crossing points.
7. Mr. Ban said that he was extremely concerned that food and other forms of life-saving assistance were denied to hundreds of thousands of civilians. Measures that increased the hardship and suffering of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip as a whole were unacceptable and must cease immediately. He called on Israel to allow a steady and sufficient supply of fuel and humanitarian assistance and to

facilitate the work of the United Nations, including through unimpeded access for United Nations officials and humanitarian personnel. He said that he was encouraged that the Arab Peace Initiative was being looked at seriously as a possible platform for regional peace. As the international community faced a global economic downturn, he appealed to donors to deliver on their commitments. He said that the United Nations system would continue to stand by the Palestinian people in the difficult times and that for his part he would continue working towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the principle of land for peace and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

8. **Alejandro Foxley Rioseco**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, said that his Government's position was based on respect for the principles and rules of international law, particularly those relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes, condemnation of threats or the use of force, implementation of international treaties and agreements, full compliance with the resolutions of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies, genuine respect for human rights and rejection of all forms of terrorism. Therefore, Chile supported the right of Israelis and Palestinians to their own free and sovereign States, as called for by the General Assembly resolution adopted in 1947¹, and regretted that the resolution had been only partially implemented and only one of the States envisaged had come into existence.

9. He said that, despite all the years that had passed, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, remained an unachieved goal. It was high time for the Israeli people to be able to live peacefully, without fearing their own destruction. The Palestinian people had been the victims of a conflict that had dragged on for too long and it had brought them destruction, pain, violation of their long-postponed sovereignty, violence, indignities and unmerited hate.

10. Mr. Foxley said that Chile had recently expressed its support for the Palestinian people in various forums. At the United Nations, in particular in the Human Rights Council, Chile had joined the call for the holding of special sessions on the question of Palestine and endorsed various draft resolutions on that subject. The Government of Chile had developed programmes designed to strengthen the Palestinian Authority's public health system by sending drugs and other items and implementing a medical cooperation programme with the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority. Chile had also welcomed 117 Palestinians from the Al-Tanf refugee camp on the border between Syria and Iraq in May 2008.

11. **Riad Al-Malki**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, accused Israel of incessantly undermining the peace process by its illegal actions that were "totally contrary to the principle of land for peace and the objective of achieving a just, lasting and peaceful settlement based on the two-State solution". Despite the many resolutions, agreements and initiatives undertaken over the years to sustain and salvage the peace process, including the Arab Peace Initiative, deliberate Israeli actions continued to harm the peace process, preventing it from overcoming the serious obstacles on the path to achieving its goals, he said. The main obstacle had been the illegal settlement campaign of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, through which, for over 41 years, it had been aggressively colonizing the land it had forcibly occupied in 1967, in grave breach of international humanitarian law.

12. He said that the issue of settlement was intricately related to and at the crux of the issues of Jerusalem, borders, water and security and continued to complicate the efforts to resolve them justly. In that regard, the Annapolis Conference in November 2007 had resulted in a united and firm call for the immediate cessation of illegal settlement activities, based on the recognition that that was a prerequisite for allowing the negotiations towards ending the conflict to progress and to bring an end to the grave historical injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people for more than four decades.

¹ Resolution 181 (II).

13. Mr. Al-Malki said that Israel continued to close all of the Gaza Strip's border crossings, allowing only the infrequent opening of some of the crossings under many restrictions. Restrictions continued to be imposed on the import of food, medicine, fuel, building material and other essential supplies, which had caused a shortage of all necessities and extensive deprivation. Even purely humanitarian aid was being obstructed, as had recently been witnessed. Palestinian exports also continued to be completely prohibited by the occupying Power, thus destroying the livelihood of thousands. Every sector of life in the Gaza Strip had been disrupted by the criminal, punitive siege as a result of deliberate, unlawful policies by the occupying Power that were intended to punish the population and sink them into desperation.

14. **Paul Badji**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Israeli military operations had continued with alarming regularity. Israel had also not stopped its settlement activity to date, which was in clear contravention of its Road Map obligations under Phase I, which unequivocally called for an end to settlement expansion, including so-called natural growth. The presence of settlements in an occupied territory was illegal under international law. Settler violence against the Palestinian population was intensifying, without serious counteraction by Israeli authorities. The Israeli military continued to demolish Palestinian houses, displacing families. In addition, there were some 600 movement restrictions in various forms, which were not only causing misery, insecurity and anxiety, but also making sustainable economic activity simply impossible. In those circumstances, the important projects currently under way through generous donor contributions aimed at creating a quick positive impact on the Palestinian economy would inevitably end up as only temporary remedial steps.

15. He said that it was just impossible for the parties to reach a political solution under those conditions. It was the task of the international community to ensure that Israel complied with international law, United Nations resolutions and other agreed principles. Most importantly, Israel, the occupying Power, was obligated under the Fourth Geneva Convention² to protect civilians under its occupation and was responsible for providing basic services, such as food and medical care, and ensuring the overall welfare of the population. The applicability of that Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory had been repeatedly confirmed by the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, as well as by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. The Gaza Strip was no exception, with Israel fully controlling not only the entry and exit of people and goods but also every single aspect of the daily life of the population. The consequences of the continued violation of the Convention by Israel, a High Contracting Party, would go far beyond the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and would seriously affect the credibility of the Convention and the application of international law to other conflict situations in the world.

16. Mr. Badji said that the Palestinian people had waited for the past six decades only to see their dream of having their own State unrealized. They had endured a harsh occupation for the past four decades, the longest military occupation in modern history. They had suffered too much, for too long. Everybody knew the solution: an end to the occupation that had begun in 1967, and the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the 1949 armistice line and the related United Nations resolutions. What was needed was a collective political will to demand that that goal be implemented to bring long overdue justice to the Palestinian people. The task was shouldered by the whole international community, including Latin American and Caribbean countries.

² Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973)

17. The representative of **Cuba**, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and emphasized the Movement's determination to multiply efforts to resolve the Palestine question, including the adverse situation of refugees. The representative of **Indonesia** said that his Government was of the view that the forthcoming due date for a permanent solution by the end of 2008, as had been envisaged by the Annapolis Conference, should not hamper the efforts of all parties to continue the negotiation process, address core issues on the question of Palestine and pave the way towards the common goal of peace.

18. The representative of **Egypt** said that he supported the most basic right of all, to live safely in one's own homeland, and called on Israel to put an end to targeting Palestinian leaders and punishing the Palestinian people. He also urged the international community not to turn a blind eye on the colossal human rights abuses inflicted on the Palestinian people by Israel. The representative of **Malaysia** said that the 60-year-old conflict would continue for years to come unless the international community looked seriously at the core issues related to the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. He cast doubt on the sincerity of Israel in the peace process, deplored the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and called for the cessation of all forms of aggression.

19. The representative of **Ecuador** urged countries to fulfil their commitments and condemned the violence and terrorism in the region. He also called on the international community to ensure protection of the civilian population in the occupied territories. The representative of the **League of Arab States** said that the negotiations faced a dangerous impasse, with the continuing blockade of Gaza by Israel, acts of collective punishment of the Palestinian population, the building of the wall and the holding of thousands of Palestinian prisoners, all of which undermined international efforts to reactivate the peace process.

20. The representative of the **United Nations Human Settlements Programme** said that under its programme local authorities and communities, Palestinian and Israeli, discussed common environmental problems and implemented local projects to improve housing, sanitation and health conditions. The representative of **Lebanon** stated that Western countries had converted the struggle of a people over territory and sovereignty into a religious conflict and it had been impossible to revert that myth. The myth was manifest in the wall, the settlements, the largest prison in the world, where one and a half million Gazans lived without water, light and hospitals, and people died every day because they did not have access to medical care or medicine.

21. The representative of **Colombia** reasserted his Government's support of the Road Map for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in spite of the decade that had gone by without achieving its main goal of a lasting solution. He reiterated support for the right of both parties to have secure, internationally recognized borders. The representative of **Jordan** said that the wall, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the crimes against civilians and the presence of settlements clearly obstructed the noble objective of peace. He pledged the efforts of his Government, together with the international community, the United Nations, the Quartet and Latin American and Caribbean countries, to help the Palestinian people in the midst of a severe economic situation and aggressive Israeli practices. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had rightfully concluded in the first report³ which it had submitted to the General Assembly in 1976 that the question of Palestine was at "the heart of the Middle East problem".

22. The representative of the **Syrian Arab Republic** said that the meeting had reminded the participants of a captive people suffering from terrorism imposed by Israel and denial of basic commodities. He reaffirmed support for the rights of the Palestinian people to recover its territory and

³ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35).

establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The representative of **Algeria** stated that the persistent Israeli policy of occupation raised serious doubts about the intention of Israel regarding the final status of the Palestinian territory. With those measures, Israel was clearly drawing a new map on the ground, paralysing chances for the future establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State.

23. The representative of **the Islamic Republic of Iran** said that he expected the international community to heighten efforts to achieve peace in the Palestinian Territory in order to end the suffering of its people. The representative of **Morocco** called on the international community to work united in order to protect holy places, and offered his Government's full support to help ease the suffering of the Palestinian people.

III. PLENARY SESSIONS

Plenary I

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

24. **Ahmad Soboh**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, said that PLO had provided the legal-political framework acknowledged by all parties for the signing of any agreement, however partial, in benefit of the Palestinian people. During the leadership of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Government of Israel had abided by the agreements; the bilateral relationship with the Palestinians had borne fruit. Almost 80 new laws had been approved, creating a legal framework that could serve as the foundation for the development of a future Palestinian State and parliament. However, with the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995, the context favourable to an incipient peace accord had died with him.

25. Mr. Soboh asserted that that first historical stage of negotiations had provided hope for a provisional peace agreement, with parties sitting down to negotiate, Palestinian prisoners being freed from Israeli jails and a strong international drive in favour of a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Some \$500 million a year in international assistance had been donated to Palestinian institutions, contributing to finance, education, health and other social areas that consumed 80 per cent of the Palestinian budget. However, the ensuring Israeli Governments had frozen the process and that situation had continued to date. The fragile foundations of a future peace agreement had been destroyed, interrupting the negotiation process, and the subsequent Israeli Governments had made no efforts to continue the work of former Prime Minister Rabin. In 2008, the international community had donated €1 billion to the Palestinians, which was the highest amount ever allotted to a people in the process of achieving independence. Although Mr. Soboh was grateful for that support, he said that the Palestinians did not need funds to improve their lives under occupation; instead, they preferred living with less but free from occupation.

26. **Idalmis Brooks Beltrán**, researcher at the Centre for African and Middle East Studies in Havana, referred to the effects on the Palestinian population of the construction of the wall, indicating that to date, 57 per cent of the projected 721 kilometres of the wall had already been completed; 409 km of its total length. The wall continued to be extended to include settlements with a large number of Israelis; if finished, nearly 10 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, would end up isolated by the barrier and connected to Israel. The construction of the wall had had negative effects on the Palestinian population from the beginning, the most evident of which were the limitations on the movement of people, the division of entire families, the loss of land, increasing difficulties in accessing medical care in Israel due to the permits required by the Israeli authorities and the heightened controls of the Israeli army, with students having to go through checkpoints in order to get to their schools and universities on the other side of the wall.

27. Ms. Brooks said if the wall was completed, it would have a devastating effect on the Palestinian population. Nearly half of the more than 60,000 Palestinians living in 12 towns would be completely surrounded by two different stretches of the barrier, and 124,300 living in 28 towns would be surrounded on three sides by the barrier and physically closed off on the fourth side, separating them from the rest of the West Bank. In the light of that scenario, Ms. Brooks demanded that the Israeli Government cease the construction of the wall in the West Bank and dismantle what had already been built, thus complying with the Advisory Opinion⁴ of the International Court of Justice, which had ruled that the barrier was illegal.

28. **Pedro Brieger**, Argentine sociologist and journalist specializing in international affairs, spoke about the *nakba* (the catastrophe) as a political and communications phenomenon, and said that the concept was frequently used among Israelis, Palestinians, the media and politicians. In the ideological battle between Israelis and Palestinians, the Palestinians had triumphed by validating the term. The media had begun using the term *nakba* to coincide with another circumstance that had bolstered the Palestinian position: the emergence of Israeli historians questioning what had always been the ideological foundation for the creation of the Israeli State. Among them were Simha Flapan, author of *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*; Benny Morris, who wrote *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*; Ilan Pappé, author of *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51*, and Avi Shlaim, who published *Collusion across the Jordan*. King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine.

29. Mr. Brieger explained that the ideological construction of *nakba* was of very recent date, approximately 20 years. Today, when reporting on Israel's anniversary events, practically all newspapers, especially in Argentina, mentioned *nakba* as the expulsion of the Palestinian people in 1948, revealing a shift in balance on the positioning of Israelis and the Palestinians in the media.

30. **Adi Ashkenazi**, Director of the Business and Economics Department of the Peres Centre for Peace, provided data and statistics on the economic situation of Israel and of the Palestinian people, and suggested ways in which Israel could contribute to Palestinian development. In 2007, he said, Palestinian exports to Israel had totalled \$367 million, whereas its imports from Israel totalled \$2,758 million. About 50,000 Palestinian workers entered Israel daily; another 134,771 entered Israel for humanitarian purposes. The Palestinian economy was the second largest export market of Israel after that of the United States of America.

31. Mr. Ashkenazi said that there were three main lines of action by which Israel could contribute to the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan: easing movement restrictions within the West Bank, such as internal checkpoints and border passages; defining long-term policies on Palestinian employment in Israel; and upgrading security cooperation, which would directly enhance economic growth. Trade might be facilitated by a number of measures, such as upgrading the security check system to reduce checking times; introducing an online data system with easy access and customer information; issuing permits for building privately operated logistics centres; and approving the engagement of the Palestinian Authority in day to day activities at border crossings. At sea ports, Israel could introduce a goods transit agreement to reduce dependency on Israeli institutions, allocate a platform for Palestinian goods at ports and allow door-to-door transportation using trucks driven by Arab Israelis. Mr. Ashkenazi recommended a number of additional measures for Israel, such as increasing access to credit, investments and capacity-building for small and medium-sized enterprises; developing the agricultural service sector and increasing land efficiency use and other natural resources; supporting industrial development and modernization; and developing an internationally competitive tourism sector.

32. **Daniel Jadue**, Vice-President of the Development Organization of the Palestinian Federation of Chile, spoke about two phenomena that permeated the thinking, feelings and behaviour of Israelis,

⁴ 9 July 2004.

Palestinians and the international community. He said that Israelis were suffering from a collective schizophrenia, which was also reflected among world Powers and the international community, creating an Israeli society fearful of a heap of sticks and stones, in spite of its own weapons arsenal. In spite of all the destruction and crimes it had committed, Israel appeared as the victim of a conflict for which it was solely responsible. This distortion of reality was not spontaneous but the consequence of a global communications policy to which the international community had also fallen victim.

33. Mr. Jadue said that Palestinians, on the other hand, had sunk into a learned hopelessness, the fruit of traumatic and unjust experiences and the denial of their most basic rights, from which the Palestinians had been unable to defend themselves adequately. They did not believe the Arab world, which, possessing such a powerful economic weapon - their oil reserves - had never done anything to pressure Western Powers. The Palestinians did not believe in the intentions of the Israelis, who had always acted with double standards, speaking about peace while planning warfare. Israel had kept its own society and the international community prisoner of the collective illness that made them regard the Israelis as the natural projection of Holocaust victims. The international community did nothing to force Israel into compliance with international law, in spite of the many condemning resolutions and the constant disregard of Israel for international law and human rights. Palestinians also did not believe in the international community, which had reacted swiftly and mobilized the largest army in the world in the case of other, much shorter occupations. The European Union and the United States had become true accomplices in covering up or ignoring the worst, most extensive and dramatic human rights violations that contemporary history had ever witnessed.

Plenary II

International efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine

34. **Riyad Mansour**, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, said that the continuous efforts of the international community had not brought about the fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, mainly because of the intransigence of Israel and its total disrespect and contempt for international law. From the very beginning, Israel had acted with flagrant impunity, denying the rights of the Palestinian people and committing grave breaches, including systematic human rights violations, war crimes and acts of State terror, with the deliberate intent of perpetuating its military occupation of the Palestinian land in order to achieve the de facto annexation of as much of that land as possible.

35. He said that over four decades, Israel had been confiscating Palestinian land and destroying Palestinian property for the purpose of constructing, expanding and entrenching its network of illegal settlements, into which hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers had been illegally transferred in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol 1⁵. The illegal colonization campaign of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, posed the most dangerous threat to the achievement of a two-State solution. The cumulative impact of the brutal policies of Israel had been extensive and disastrous, with both short- and long-term consequences. The Gaza Strip in particular had been severely impoverished and devastated. Such oppressive and humiliating Israeli practices had kept the Palestinian people under siege and forced the displacement and flight of many civilians.

36. Mr. Mansour said that the two-State solution would be impossible to achieve as long as the occupation and colonization continued. The complete cessation of Israel's illegal colonization campaign and all other Israeli violations and grave breaches of international law was imperative for salvaging the potential for peace, which diminished with each passing year. The international community had not shown the necessary resolve or political will to ensure Israeli compliance with United Nations

⁵ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1125, No. 17512.

resolutions. Appeasement had not worked and calls and demands made without action to follow them up had not worked. Practical measures must be seriously considered, including the possibility of boycotts, sanctions and divestments to actually compel Israel to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions, to abide by its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention⁶ and the human rights covenants and to respect fully the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion⁷. Mr. Mansour called on the Security Council to play a more active role by passing a resolution calling on the Quartet, with the close cooperation of the regional partners, to work closely with the parties in order to implement a peace settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map.

37. **Diego Arria**, Senior Adviser to the International Crisis Group and former Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, noted that almost all the presentations on the first day of the meeting had had many ideas in common, and that was positive in that they reflected a common spirit in the international community. However, the disadvantage of the common spirit was that it could also lead to its own fatigue, deviating attention from the complex issue. In spite of the fact that the Palestinian question had generated interest and mobilized efforts at the United Nations like no other issue, there were other conflicts or violent scenarios that also drew the attention of the international community, thus diminishing the urgency of finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

38. Mr. Arria said that it was important today for the Arab community to address the issue of Palestinian internal divisions; he acknowledged the significant role of Egypt in that regard. He expressed his firm rejection of radical positions on both sides and recalled the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who had said that the Organization, in spite of all its defects and failures, had constituted the best hope for humanity to replace the battleground for a conference table.

39. **Yossi Yonah**, Associate Professor in the Department of Education of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, asserted that, in the wake of the demise of forces of civil society supporting the cause of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, efforts must be directed to mobilize global civil society in support of a peaceful solution to the conflict. The main principles accepted to some extent by Israeli and Palestinian camps supporting the cause of peace were relatively clear and included a two-State solution, with the Palestinian State to be established on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and with Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the refugee problem. The task today for civil society activists was to push the peace process forward, creating an atmosphere in which those reasonable principles might be endorsed by both sides and finally result in a viable peace agreement. He said that the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority had reached a point in which no one took them seriously and each side believed that the other side was not negotiating in good faith. That was the result of the failure of the Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David in 2000, followed by the second intifada which had worsened the sense of hopelessness, escalated violence on both sides and set the scenario for the electoral victory of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the demise of the forces of civil society in Israel that had supported peace negotiations.

40. Mr. Yonah said that, while most Israelis believed that any peace negotiations must bring about the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, although they were often unwilling to pay the price for it, they also believed that there were no true Palestinian counterparts with whom to negotiate, and that belief had been reinforced by the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006. That event had created an equivalent repercussion among Palestinians, particularly in the light of the harsh measures of the Israeli army and the continuation of settlements in the West Bank. Given those circumstances, international civil

⁶ Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973

⁷ 9 July 2004.

society and international political leaders in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be engaged. Special efforts needed to be directed to diaspora communities, both Israeli and Palestinian, in support of reasonable solutions.

41. **Fuad Chahin**, Vice-President of the Palestinian Federation of Chile, said that it was unacceptable that 60 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Palestine question remained an international shame, where the same principles continued to be a distant utopia for millions of Palestinians suffering from the violation of their basic human rights on a daily basis. The international system had failed, and the total disregard of Israel for numerous resolutions, international law and humanitarian rights was clear evidence of that fact. The failure of the different initiatives over the past 17 years was due to the fact that Israel had been established as a colonizing project seeking to control more land, with fewer Arabs. The peace process had resulted only in more occupation, settlement expansion, the construction of the wall and the brutal and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip.

42. Mr. Chahin said that Israel had carried out a strong propaganda campaign of global scope that had confused international public opinion, installing the idea that Israel represented the values of the West and that Palestinians were Arab fundamentalists and terrorists. The international community should strengthen the United Nations system and seek alternative solutions, because the only thing that had become clear was that what had been done during the past 17 years was not the solution.

Plenary III

Support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a permanent settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

43. **Farid Suwwan**, Palestinian Ambassador in Argentina, said that Latin American and Caribbean countries and their regional bodies and blocs, such as the Organization of American States, Common Market of the South, Union of South American Nations and the Caribbean Community, might be in a privileged position to contribute to a lasting peace settlement, given that the region was beginning to acquire growing political and economic relevance in the international arena. He said that a State that defined its citizenship by religious affiliation was something completely strange in Latin America; therefore, most countries in the region could approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a perspective exempt of preconceived cultural prejudices as those existing in other parts of the world. The Road Map and other documents indicated the route to follow. The main mistake had been not establishing preventive or dissuasive measures in case of non-compliance at the different stages and not setting guarantees for compliance with agreements and the implementation of statements and intentions.

44. Mr. Suwwan said that countries in the Latin American region should urgently assume a position of greater weight and protagonism in resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that might be done through different lines of action to strengthen the Palestinian economy and reinforce public awareness and solidarity as a means of peaceful resistance to the occupation of the Palestinian Territory. Other steps included bolstering the role of the Latin American and Caribbean countries in the negotiation process, and denouncing the breach by Israel of international and humanitarian law.

45. **Farid Kahhat**, Professor of Political Science at the Pontifical Catholic University of Lima, referred to public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Latin America through the analysis of public opinion polls and the role of Latin American representatives in the United Nations. Two international surveys on Latin American views of the conflict, conducted in the United States, Mexico and Peru, revealed how the way in which the questions had been posed determined the poll results. The apparently strong support for Israel at 49 per cent in the United States in one poll had dropped to 21 per cent in the other.

46. Mr. Kahhat recalled the role played by Latin American representatives to the United Nations when it had approved General Assembly resolution 181(II) on the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine to create two States, one Arab and one Jewish. Of the vote, 13 Latin American countries had voted in favour, six had abstained and one had voted against. In considering that the total number of votes in favour of partition had been 33, the votes from the region had been crucial for the approval of the resolution. Since then, however, the relevance and role of Latin America in the General Assembly had diminished gradually and significantly, as had the influence of the General Assembly as a decision-making body on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There was a paradox in excluding Hamas as a legitimate counterpart because it did not unconditionally recognize the right of Israel to exist. Israel already existed as a State and there was nothing Hamas could do about it, while the expansion of Israeli settlements and construction of the separation wall could eventually impede the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian State.

47. **Ibrahim Al-Zeben**, Palestinian Ambassador to Brazil, said that Latin America, with millions of Arab and Jewish descendents, could serve as an ideal scenario for a process of understanding and reconciliation among Palestinians and Israelis. Latin America should become more involved in the peace process by sending delegations or special envoys that might bridge the parties. Brazil had already taken that step. Political leaders and civil society, as well as the Catholic Church in Latin America, could begin promoting activities and encounters between the Arab and Jewish communities in their countries and denounce the violence and promote the observance of international law.

48. Mr. Al-Zeben said that the official attitude of Latin American and Caribbean Governments had generally been notoriously pro-Israel and timidly pro-Palestinian. In the 1980s, two Latin American embassies had actually been established in occupied Jerusalem, a mistake that had been fortunately reconsidered and recently corrected. Latin America should revise its past policies towards the area, and some countries in the region were already moving in that direction. The initiative of Latin American countries, in which Chile had been at the forefront, of establishing diplomatic missions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was commendable. Costa Rica, a small Central American country and one of the founders of the United Nations, had also provided an example to follow, by establishing diplomatic relations based on General Assembly resolution 181(II), thus recognizing the Palestinian State that had never been created. When criticized by its adversaries for that decision, Costa Rica had simply said that it had been complying with international law. It was time for all countries that had voted in favour of resolution 181(II) to recognize the second State, Palestine, and grant it its birth certificate.

49. **Arlene Clemesha**, Professor of Arab Culture of the University of São Paulo and member of the Institute for Arab Culture in Brazil, stated that Latin America and the Caribbean had been incapable of converting their verbal support to the Palestinian cause in concrete and effective actions. Latin American countries continued to sign free trade agreements with Israel and purchase weapons and advanced technology from Israel; their universities also established cooperation agreements with Israel and were proud of the academic and intellectual exchange with Israel. In most cases, none of that was based on the intentions of Governments in the region, but rather done under corporate pressure. Brazil was importing state-of-the-art technology, communications and security equipment developed by Israel to feed its own war industry against the Palestinian people.

50. Ms. Clemesha said that the region was witnessing a process of renewed civil society action in defence of Palestinian rights, whether that action was educational, activist or lobbyist. There was a trend towards going from street activism to institutional initiatives, armed with resources and holding more than one strategy for action. Civil society in the region was in line with the main strategy for action of global civil society, which was a non-violent strategy of calling for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel in order to demand that it comply with its international obligations.

51. **Lisa Kaufman**, member of the Israeli–Palestinian Bereaved Families Forum and of Peace Now, spoke of the need to work on the reconciliation of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, even before the parties arrived at a peace settlement. In a protracted conflict marred with acts of violence, arriving at a peace treaty became more and more difficult and might be very much delayed. In a post-conflict situation, the leaders of the fighting parties were supposed to launch reconciliation processes and institute mechanisms to that end. That was not realistic in earlier stages; therefore, it was left to civil society organizations to take such responsibilities upon themselves. Peace treaties were signed between leaders, not peoples. History showed that only half of such treaties had been fully or partially implemented within five years. In a protracted conflict, where people of the sides involved were in close proximity and even mixed with each other, it was very important to build peace from the bottom up.

52. Ms. Kaufman noted that while peace negotiations had stumbled groups and individuals on both sides were reaching out to one another, participating in joint activities and cooperating in peace, justice, developmental, environmental, educational and humanitarian projects. Through such actions, they were already promoting reconciliation indirectly in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities. However, the asymmetry of the situation between Israelis and Palestinians was making it more challenging to work together on equal terms.

IV. CLOSING SESSION

53. **Hamidon Ali**, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations and Rapporteur of the meeting, presented the concluding remarks of the organizers (see annex I to the present report).

54. **Mai Al-Kaila**, Ambassador of Palestine to Chile, in her capacity as representative of Palestine, said that the international community's solidarity with the Palestinian people and their cause was very important, and expressed the hope that that solidarity, which was growing every day, would pressure Israel into complying with its obligations as a Member State of the United Nations. She expressed pride in the democracy that had been maintained in the Occupied Palestinian Territory despite its occupation, as well as its pluralism from a political standpoint. In the name of the Palestinian Authority and President Mahmoud Abbas, Ms. Al-Kaila reiterated her gratitude to the Government of Chile, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for holding the meeting.

55. **Juan Pablo Lira Bianchi**, Director-General for Foreign Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, speaking on behalf of the host Government, said that Chile had been pleased to have hosted such an important meeting and to have played a role in the search for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. He reiterated that the unalterable stance of Chile was based on strict observance of the norms of international law, with particular emphasis on peaceful solutions; condemnation of the use or threat of force; and compliance with United Nations resolutions. He welcomed all the ideas, formulas, suggestions and criticisms that had been presented at the meeting, as new strategies towards achieving a permanent peace based on mutual respect and recognition were discussed. Chile supported all efforts towards a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to a free and sovereign State and the right of the Israeli people to live within secure borders. He also noted the support of Chile for the United Nations resolutions related to the conflict, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III), Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as for the Quartet's Road Map. He also stressed that peace in the region had a good possibility of succeeding if proper respect was given to the relevant multilateral resolutions.

56. He recalled that Latin America and the Caribbean had also known the pain of conflict between countries. Nevertheless, the States in the region had been able to work together to develop stable democratic institutions, thereby consolidating peace. In that regard, the international community could count on Latin America's support for all steps towards solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He added that the region should be considered a natural venue for any future meetings about the Middle East problem, since participants would be able to draw on the experiences of Latin America.

V. Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace

57. **Paul Badji**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said in his opening remarks that an important part of the Committee's programme of work was dedicated to coordination and cooperation with civil society. The Committee regularly held civil society conferences in various parts of the world; it also regularly met and held consultations with representatives of civil society organizations, as well as with parliamentarians in order to brief each other on current work and future plans. Civil society organizations, including the media, were at the forefront of the efforts aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, inter alia, by informing and mobilizing public opinion. Non-violent action, including bringing together Palestinian, Israeli and international activists and holding people-to-people dialogues, were just some of the ways in which civil society fought for peace using peaceful means. No less important was the everyday work done by civil society organizations aimed at helping ordinary Palestinians cope with the harsh conditions of occupation. This work contributed to preserving the social fabric of Palestinian communities under the duress of the decades-old conflict. It also preserved and strengthened human links between Israeli and Palestinian societies, laying the groundwork for the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

58. Mr. Badji reiterated the Committee's high appreciation for the multifaceted activities and initiatives taken in Latin American and Caribbean countries in support of the Palestinian people by civil society organizations, such as the Organization of Solidarity of the People of African, Asia and Latin America, the Argentine Confederation of Arab Entities and the Federación Palestina de Chile. The Committee commended and encouraged those organizations to continue and intensify their efforts in the irrespective fields of activity, with a view to alleviating hardships of Palestinians living under occupation, mobilizing national and international public opinion and engaging the respective national decision-makers to support serious international efforts aimed at a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

59. **Eduardo Gálvez Carvallo**, Director for Multilateral Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, on behalf of the host Government, said that Chile was pleased to host such an important meeting and thus have the opportunity to play a role in the search for peace. He noted that his country's well-known position on Israel and Palestine was based on strict observation of international law, including respect for international treaties and United Nations resolutions.

60. Mr. Gálvez Carvallo noted that so far no efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had been successful. Only pain, destruction, insecurity and mistrust had prevailed. Today's meeting would therefore present a challenge to Latin American civil society as it searched for and debated ideas for a solution. He expressed Chile's support for the right of the Palestinian people to a free and sovereign State, as well as the right of Israelis to exist within secure borders. He also voiced support for the efforts of the Quartet and the Annapolis process, as well as all efforts made towards finding a durable solution to the conflict. Peace had a good chance of succeeding if multilateral resolutions and international law were voluntarily adhered to.

61. **Mauricio Abu-Ghosh**, Chairman of the Palestine Federation of Chile, noted that Chile hosted one of the largest Palestinian communities outside the Arab world and that young Chileans of Palestinian origin would never forget the plight of the Palestinian people. To mitigate Palestinian suffering, three

steps should be followed. First, illegal settlements had to be dismantled. Second, the separation wall had to be taken down. Third, the more than 600 checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had to be removed.

62. Mr. Abu-Ghosh called on the international community to raise its voice at the United Nations and compel Israel to respect the United Nations resolutions that pertained to it. While Palestinians were waiting for justice, liberty and independence after they had already suffered enough, Israel was rewarded with trade agreements instead of being saddled with boycotts. In that context, he called on the Palestinian diaspora, as well as Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to engage in acts of peaceful resistance, with the goal of achieving a free, sovereign and democratic Palestine.

63. **Riad Al-Malki**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, in his keynote presentation, said that, despite talk of a total freeze of settlement activity at Annapolis in 2007, Israel had increased settlement activity by 36 per cent. Settlement activity was the core of the conflict. Israel continued to build more settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory even while negotiations were taking place. He said that it was important to focus on the Arab Peace Initiative, which had been agreed not only by the 22 Arab countries but also by 55 countries in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. For its part, the Palestinian Authority had promoted the Initiative by publishing it in the media in various countries, including Israel, Arab countries, Europe, South Africa and the United States.

64. **Imad N. Jadaa**, Ambassador, Palestinian Embassy in Colombia, said that the international political community seemed to be moving away from a durable, responsible and dignified solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. After all, one year after the Annapolis Conference, the construction of Israeli settlements, checkpoints and the separation wall was continuing. Attacks by Israeli forces against the Occupied Palestinian Territory had not stopped. The situation regarding political prisoners was not improving, and journalists and civilians in Hebron were still being attacked by Israelis. Despite such suffering, Palestinian life continued with vigour, through student and artistic organizations and business, social and humanitarian groups, which had kept pressing without rest for a dignified solution to the crisis.

65. Mr. Jadaa said that today States were not the only actors in the international system. There also existed groups of journalists, professors, intellectuals, artists, students and human rights activists. Such civil society groups were united in their understanding of the suffering of the Palestinian people. In fact it was that transnational civil society which was helping to bring about mechanisms to help the Palestinians, such as United Nations conferences. Fortunately, the Palestinians were not alone; they had brothers who transcended borders and nationalities. In thanking international activists for their solidarity, he said that the growing numbers of civil society organizations dedicated to helping the Palestinians ensured that the Palestinian cause would not be forgotten.

66. **Gadi Baltiansky**, Director-General of the Geneva Initiative, Tel Aviv, said that most Israelis and Palestinians supported the idea of a two-State solution. Yet both sides did not believe that such a solution would be implemented in the near future because each side was convinced that the other side was not interested in peace. Steps must be taken to convince each of the sides that the other side was serious in its intention to reach peace. He suggested that, in public perception and public debate, language be changed from zero-sum to win-win. It was easy to divide the world into good and bad and think that the more over side lost the more the opposite side won, but such an approach was not conducive to reaching an agreement. The “competition of hatred” – who could use harsher words – only led to mistrust.

67. Mr. Baltiansky said that whoever was looking for justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would never find peace, because peace was a matter of compromise. Justice for one was injustice for the other. For the Jewish people, the fact that they would not be able to live in or have sovereignty over Hebron, a holy place for Jews, under a future peace agreement was not justice, but that would have to be

compromised in order for them to live in peace. For the Palestinians, not being able to go back to cities such as Jaffa and Haifa where their ancestors had lived, was not justice, but that had to be compromised for them to live in peace and freedom. Fairness and a practical solution had to be sought, rather than ultimate justice.

68. **Doris Musalem**, Professor, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México, Mexico City, spoke of the role that professors and academics could play in finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In stressing the central role of Zionism in the current conflict, she said that it was a philosophy that coloured many sectors of society, including academia. In Mexico, professors had to confront Zionist ideology in their own universities. For example, academic links, such as the one between the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, brought the Zionist position into humanities and social science courses in Mexico. In addition, through such links, Israel was often presented as a normal country despite its genocidal positions against the Palestinians. She also spoke of widespread self-censorship among professors in Mexico who were afraid of being accused of anti-Semitism.

69. Regarding academic conferences on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ms. Musalem cited examples in Mexico of organizers inviting only pro-Israel speakers. The word “peace” was often attached to the titles of such events, even though there was a wide gap between the strong political influence of Israel and the minority of professors who continued to work towards finding a just solution to the question of Palestine. While the Shimon Peres Foundation for Peace in Mexico had been launched in conjunction with the University of Tel Aviv in 2003, there was no corresponding Yasser Arafat Foundation. In that regard, she called for new strategies which would promote cooperation among academics in the region and truly be devoted to the search for peace.

70. **Edy Kaufman**, Co-chairperson, Centre for Research and Cooperation, Jerusalem, spoke of respecting both the Palestinian and Israeli narratives. Cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian researchers was limited and the push for such links had declined since the wave of optimism following the Oslo Accords⁸. That was worrying since educated people had a greater responsibility to foster such links, and since professors routinely dealt with young people, who were more likely to be the perpetrators and the victims of violence. In speaking of initiatives to bring Israeli and Palestinian professors together, he said that the largest obstacle to doing so on the Israeli side was insularity. He noted that Israeli academics existed in their own isolated world, competing among themselves for professional survival, promotion, tenure etc. In that regard, they often questioned the value of devoting time to cooperation with Palestinian professors. On the Palestinian side, a major obstacle to cooperation was an aversion to “normalization”. He noted that Palestinian academics often felt that they could not engage with Israeli counterparts as equals because of the “occupied-occupier” dichotomy. While citing physical barriers to cooperation as well, such as the separation wall and numerous checkpoints, many Palestinian academics said that they would cooperate with Israelis only when peace had been achieved. However, that was a mistake, since cooperation was required to achieve peace in the first place.

71. Turning to restrictions on academic freedom, Mr. Kaufman said that a boycott of all Israeli universities, which had been proposed in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, would be counterproductive because Israeli thinking would become only more isolated. He was worried about a double standard, wondering why no sanctions had been placed against Chinese academics who had not spoken out against the events in Tiananmen Square or United States professors who had remained silent over the Iraq war. On the Palestinian side, he acknowledged that professors were subjected to travel restrictions and their universities were shut down after terror scares; he said that such collective

⁸ Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, Oslo, 13 September 1993.

punishment was unacceptable. He also stressed that inciting violence should not be allowed in universities, an occurrence that had taken place on both sides.

72. **Tilda Rabi**, President of the Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Argentina, Buenos Aires, said that efforts to maintain a cloak of silence over the occupation, colonization and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian Territory had been more successful in Latin America than in other regions. Mass media, for example, did not report regularly on what was happening in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Even Palestinian-related news items that made headlines in Europe and the United States remained suspiciously unnoticed in Latin American capitals.

73. Ms. Rabi noted the schizophrenic attitudes of Latin American Governments, which on one hand claimed to respect the principles of self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian State but on the other equated the occupier with the occupied and the aggressor with the victim. In that context, she criticized preferential trade agreements between the Common Market of the South and Israel. She added that it was the responsibility of the United Nations, the Palestinian Authority and the League of Arab States to produce adequate educational material in Spanish on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Only through education and knowledge could the moral conscience of Latin Americans be raised.

74. **Einat Ronen**, Manager of the Civil Society Dialogue and Cooperation Unit, Peres Centre for Peace, Tel Aviv, said that since Oslo thousands of Israelis and Palestinians had been engaged in joint initiatives seeking to foster mutual understanding through open channels of dialogue, which was a deep reflection of the need and will of both Israelis and Palestinians to keep looking for the most influential and meaningful way to pave the road to peace and reconciliation. Those programmes and initiatives involved various figures, such as journalists, teachers, mental health professionals, actors, researchers, diplomats and doctors. Children and youth were part of peace education programmes through sports and art. One of the strategies used for such joint programmes was dialogue and discourse, in which the major element in each encounter was dedicated to interaction between Israeli and Palestinian participants. Structured dialogue sessions were woven into activities in order to enable the development of professional and personal ties. The main goal was to create a platform for a direct, eye-to-eye and open dialogue to hear the other side's wishes, fears, hopes and desperation in order to create a secure and respectful platform for two narratives to be told and shared. Another strategy was joint initiatives, which included brainstorming and development of joint future initiatives in order to empower the participants as individuals and as a unitary group, thereby encouraging ongoing interaction and cooperation between participants.

75. Ms. Ronen said that each participant in the joint programmes was serving as an agent of dialogue and change who affected public opinion at the grass-roots level, since they had the ability to reach out to numerous indirect beneficiaries. As some of the participants were influential figures within their communities, working closely with various sectors from the public sphere, they effectively had an impact on the mindsets, attitudes and opinions of people in each society. Such a ripple effect ensured that the programmes had major impact far beyond direct beneficiaries. The dialogue developing between the two civil societies had created a platform for a number of transformations: from the discourse of demands to the discourse of needs and wishes; from blaming to taking responsibility; from being reactive to affording freedom to choose a response to a partner; from a monologue to a dialogue; from closed communication without trust to open and fair communication; from focusing on differences to focusing on common ground; and from a dead-end approach to one characterized by creativity.

76. **Lourdes Cervantes Vásquez**, Head of the Political Department, Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, Havana, said that meetings such as the present one were important for exchanging information on the Palestinian struggle, denouncing harmful policies and coming together to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people. She spoke of the revolutionary history of

Cuba and the emphasis that country had placed on solidarity with all subjugated peoples throughout the world. She stressed that the Palestinian people could always count on the support of Cuba, and it was essential to spread the message of Palestinian suffering throughout the world.

77. Ms. Cervantes noted that Latin America was currently experiencing new waves of emancipation and social and popular movements were bringing together students, artists and labourers. The region was thus passing through an unprecedented moment, and it was an ideal time to act in solidarity with the people of Palestine. She stressed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was not a bilateral one, since Israel acted with the support of the United States. A just and lasting solution would come about only when there was an independent Palestinian State, comprising Gaza and the West Bank, with East Jerusalem as the capital. A better world would not be possible as long as Palestine remained occupied and crushed.

78. **Jaime Abedrapo**, President of the Palestinian Committee for the Right of Return – Chile, Santiago, said that the international community should not tolerate human rights violations and should instead understand the causes of the current situation. The Palestinians had been searching unsuccessfully for peace and justice for 60 years in a variety of sectors, including at the United Nations Security Council. They were getting tired of hearing that they had rights. International treaties served only as interesting reading material for the many Palestinians who were trapped by prisons, checkpoints and the separation wall. The last time he had been in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he had stayed with a Palestinian who had told him that the world should not forget that life continued behind the separation wall.

79. Mr. Abedrapo stressed that people wishing to end the conflict needed to be realists. He also spoke of the need to figure out how Latin America, a region plagued by poverty and corruption and physically far from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, could help the situation. He noted that ambassadors from the United States and the United Kingdom were not attending the forum, despite the fact that their countries sat on the Security Council and participated in the Quartet. They needed to be persuaded by civil society to come to meetings such as the present one.

80. **Hanna Yousef Emile Safieh**, General Secretary of the Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean, Natal, said that there were 500,000 people of Palestinian origin in Latin America, and organizations and federations in each country comprised the Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr. Safieh said that internal Palestinian divisions should stop immediately and reconciliation dialogue should take place without any preconditions. Peace should never be the reflection of the balance of power but should have international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions as its guiding compass. He supported the idea of broadening the Quartet to include three to four more countries, such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa, which would bring about a new configuration with more credibility, making it a better reflection of international reality.

Annex I

Concluding remarks of the organizers

1. The **United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace** was held at the Headquarters of the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, on 11 and 12 December 2008, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Participants in the meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israeli and Palestinian experts, representatives of United Nations Members States and Observers, parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of civil society and the media.
2. The objective of the meeting was to foster greater international support, including by Latin American and Caribbean States, for the efforts at advancing the Israeli-Palestinian political process and achieving a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Participants discussed ways of consolidating and synergizing current international peace efforts and considered how Latin American and Caribbean States could effectively contribute to those efforts through their action in national and intergovernmental mechanisms.
3. Participants noted that 2008 marked 60 years of Palestinian dispossession, or the *nakba* (the catastrophe), when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had been forced to leave their homes and properties as a result of the Arab-Israeli hostilities in 1948. They observed that, 60 years later, the Palestinian people had still been deprived of their inalienable national rights, including the right to self-determination, as well as the right to their own independent State on all of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. The Palestine refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency today numbered over 4.6 million. They had yet to claim their inalienable right of return and remained in limbo in neighbouring Middle Eastern countries until a just and lasting solution to end their plight had been achieved. Participants reiterated the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until it was resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law.
4. Participants welcomed the level of engagement by major stakeholders, including those from Latin America and the Caribbean, demonstrated at and after the 2007 Annapolis Conference and the Paris donors' conference of 2007 that led to the resumption of permanent status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and substantial support for the Palestinian Authority and its economic reform and development programme. They deplored the fact that the stated goal of reaching a permanent settlement by the end of 2008 had not been achieved. At the same time, they expressed their firm conviction that there was no alternative to continuing the negotiations and to strengthening international support for the process, as there was no alternative to a two-State solution.
5. Participants felt strongly that the negotiations had to be buttressed by tangible improvements in the situation on the ground. Immediately, violence from either side, including Israeli military attacks, destruction and acts of terror, had to stop and extremists from both sides had to be restrained. Settlement expansion, including in and around East Jerusalem, and the confiscation of Palestinian land and the destruction of Palestinian homes had to cease completely. The separation wall must be dismantled, in keeping with the Advisory Opinion⁹ of the International Court of Justice. The siege of the Gaza Strip needed to be lifted and the humanitarian situation drastically improved. The complex and vast system of

⁹ 9 July 2004.

checkpoints and closures in the West Bank had to be abolished and normal economic and social activity restored. Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem should be allowed to resume their legitimate functioning.

6. Participants emphasized that a critical condition for achieving a permanent settlement of the conflict was an end of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which had begun in 1967. The Palestinian people should be allowed to establish on that Territory their sovereign and independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and be able to exercise its inalienable rights.

7. Participants expressed serious concern about the situation on the ground, especially with regard to the humanitarian consequences for the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip as a result of its closure. They noted that the six-month period of calm in Gaza and southern Israel had been observed for most of the time, but that it had recently been disrupted. Participants strongly encouraged the parties to maintain that calm and to extend it to the other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. They expressed their alarm, however, that it had not led to a recovery of the situation in Gaza, since Israel had not lifted the almost complete closure. They felt that any future improvement of the situation in and around Gaza was very much dependent on the political will of Israel and its readiness to normalize life in the Gaza Strip.

8. Participants called upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite in support of President Abbas and his Government and resolve their political differences peacefully. Participants encouraged that a comprehensive national dialogue be supported by confidence-building measures to start the process of regaining national unity and reunifying Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. It was of paramount importance that the various Palestinian organizations and factions put the national interests and the aspirations of the Palestinian people above all partisan concerns. Participants firmly believed that the unity of the Palestinian people was an essential condition for achieving a viable solution to the question of Palestine.

9. Participants expressed serious concern that Israel, the occupying Power, was not abiding by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention¹⁰ to provide protection to the civilian population under occupation. The applicability of that Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, had been repeatedly affirmed by the Conference of the High Contracting Parties, as well as by the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and the International Court of Justice. Participants also underscored the illegality of the continuing settlement expansion by Israel and called for freezing immediately all settlement activity and dismantling all settlement outposts.

10. Participants recalled the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice¹¹, which had clearly stated that the construction of the wall was illegal under international law, and had insisted on its removal. They emphasized the need for more serious action by the international community in challenging the presence of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Participants noted that the mandate of the United Nations Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should be fully supported and implemented without delay.

11. Participants agreed that a negotiated solution to the issue of Jerusalem, based on international law, was absolutely central to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and fundamental for lasting peace in the whole region. They expressed great concern that the Israeli policies and actions in East Jerusalem included the issuance of demolition orders against Palestinian properties, the forcing out of Palestinian

¹⁰ Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973

¹¹ 9 July 2004.

Jerusalemites from the city and the severing of the city from the rest of the West Bank through the expansion of settlements and the construction of the separation wall. In that connection, they stated that the issue of the status of Jerusalem, as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, could be resolved only through negotiations and in full accord with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

12. Participants expressed the view that the political process towards achieving a two-State solution could benefit from the experience of Latin American and Caribbean States in their quest for independence and sovereignty, as well as the experience of South Asian States on the path to economic independence and sustainable development. They further stressed the important role played by Latin American and Caribbean States in wider efforts aimed at the continuation of the political process and the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that context, they called for enhancing South and Central America's contribution to the Middle East peace process and encouraged increased action in regional and international forums. The role of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries at the United Nations, especially in the Security Council and General Assembly, was accorded special attention, as was the role of national parliaments and parliamentarians in supporting a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

13. Participants were apprised of the various initiatives of civil society in the region in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and in solidarity with the Palestinian people; they commended their representatives for their determined efforts to help Palestinians on the ground and Palestinian refugees elsewhere to cope with the consequences of occupation. They offered encouragement to the sizeable Arab and Jewish communities in Chile and other countries in the region and urged them to stay engaged and collaborate with the worldwide movement of civil society organizations to end war, violence and occupation.

14. Participants reiterated that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be found only in accordance with international law and based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and all other relevant United Nations resolutions. The Arab Peace Initiative remained an important element for advancing peace in the region and should be seized upon. The continued support of the international community was crucial for advancing the negotiations, namely a consistent and sustainable effort by the Quartet and the regional partners with both parties. The hope was expressed that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations would continue uninterrupted in the immediate period ahead. Participants encouraged that the incoming United States Administration attach the highest priority to the Middle East peace process and engage the parties without delay.

15. Participants expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Chile and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for hosting the United Nations meeting and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation and conduct.

Annex II

List of participants

Speakers

H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Al-Zeben	Ambassador Palestinian Embassy in Brazil Brasilia
H.E. Mr. Diego Arria	Senior Adviser to the International Crisis Group Former Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations New York
Mr. Adi Ashkenazi	Director Business and Economics Department Peres Centre for Peace Tel Aviv
Mr. Pedro Brieger	Sociologist and journalist writing on international affairs Buenos Aires
Ms. Idalmis Brooks Beltrán	Researcher Centre for African and Middle East Studies Havana
Mr. Fuad Chahin	Vice-President Federación Palestina de Chile Santiago
Ms. Arlene Clemesha	Professor of Arab Culture University of São Paulo Member Institute for Arab Culture in Brazil São Paulo
Mr. Farid Kahhat	Professor of Political Science Catholic University of Lima Lima
Ms. Lisa Kaufman	Member Israeli/Palestinian Bereaved Families Forum Member Peace Now Jerusalem
H.E. Mr. Ahmad Soboh	Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Palestinian Authority Ramallah

H.E. Mr. Farid Suwwan	Ambassador Palestinian Embassy in Argentina Buenos Aires
Mr. Yossi Yonah	Associate Professor Department of Education Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Tel Aviv

**Speakers at the United Nations Public Forum
in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace**

Mr. Jaime Abedrapo	President Comité Palestino por el derecho al Retorno-Chile Santiago
Mr. Gadi Baltiansky	Director-General The Geneva Initiative Tel Aviv
H.E. Mr. Imad N. Jadaa	Ambassador Palestinian Embassy in Colombia Bogotá
Mr. Daniel Jadue	Vice-President Organización de desarrollo Federación Palestina Santiago
Mr. Edy Kaufman	Co-chairperson Centre for Research and Cooperation Jerusalem
Ms. Doris Musalem	Profesor Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana of Mexico Mexico City
Ms. Tilda Rabi	President Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Argentina Buenos Aires
Ms. Einat Ronen	Manager Civil Society Dialogue and Cooperation Peres Centre for Peace Tel Aviv
Mr. Hanna Yousef Emile Safieh	General Secretary Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean Natal

Ms. Lourdes Cervantes Vásquez Head of the Political Department
 Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples
 of Africa, Asia and Latin America
 Havana

**Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of
 the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

H.E. Mr. Paul Badji Permanent Representative of Senegal
 to the United Nations
 Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise
 of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali Permanent Representative of Malaysia
 to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. María Rubiales de Chamorro Permanent Representative of Nicaragua
 to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Riyad Mansour Permanent Observer of Palestine
 to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General

Ms. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra Executive Secretary
 Economic Commission for
 Latin America and the Caribbean

Governments

Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

**Entities having received a standing invitation to
 participate as observers in the sessions and the work
 of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent
 offices at Headquarters**

Palestine

**Other entities having received a standing invitation to
 participate as observers in the sessions and the work
 of the General Assembly and maintaining
 permanent offices at headquarters**

International Committee of the Red Cross

Intergovernmental Organizations

League of Arab States

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

Food and Agriculture Organization on the United Nations
 United Nations Development Programme
 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Civil society organizations

Asociación Argentina de Solidaridad con Palestina
 Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos Segundo Montes Mozo SJ.
 Club Árabe de San Felipe
 Comité de Cultura Palestino de Chile
 Comité Palestino por el derecho al retorno
 Comunidad Chileno-Palestino
 Confederación Palestina Latinoamericana y del
 Caribe Palestinian Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean
 Corporación de Damas Palestinas
 Edición de Fotografía Noticiosa Internacional de El Mercurio On Line
 Federación de Entidades Americano-Árabe
 Federación de Entidades Chileno-Árabe Public (FEARAB Chile)
 Federación Palestina de Chile/Palestinian Community of Chile
 Fundación Palestina Belén 2000
 Secretaría de Solidaridad del Movimiento por la Paz, la Soberanía y la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos
 Mundo sin Guerra y. Sin Violencia
 Movimiento Palestina para Todos
 Unión General de Estudiantes Palestinos
 Universidade Federal de Pelotas

Media

Al Jazeera – Qatar
 Al-Damir
 BBC
 La Tercera
 Latinskaya America
 Palabra Israelita
 Radio
 Agricultura
