



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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Bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine

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*The Bulletin can be found in the United Nations Information System
on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) on the Internet at:*
<http://unispal.un.org>

I. QUARTET ISSUES STATEMENT URGING THE RESUMPTION OF PERMANENT STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

The Quartet met in Munich on 5 February 2011 to review the developments in the Middle East and its implications for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The following statement was issued at the end of the meeting:

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The Quartet reaffirmed that negotiations should lead to an outcome that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict and achieve a two-State solution. The Quartet reiterates its support for concluding these negotiations by September 2011. The Quartet agreed to meet again at the level of Principals in mid-March on the way ahead. In advance, and as a matter of priority, it will seek via its envoys to meet separately with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Brussels, as well as with representatives of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee. In its discussions with the parties, the Quartet is giving serious consideration to their views on how to bring about resumed negotiations on all core issues, including borders and security.

The Quartet commended President Mahmoud Abbas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority, and continued Palestinian State-building efforts. It welcomed the package of measures announced by Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and Quartet Representative Blair for both the West Bank and Gaza, and encourages full implementation and additional steps.

The Quartet regrets the discontinuation of Israel's 10-month moratorium on settlement activity and strongly reaffirms that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.

The Quartet condemned rocket fire from Gaza and stressed the need for calm and security for both peoples.

In view of the developments in the Middle East, the Quartet expressed its belief that further delay in the resumption of negotiations is detrimental to prospects for regional peace and security. The Quartet emphasized the need for the parties and others concerned to undertake urgently the efforts to expedite Israeli-Palestinian and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, which is imperative to avoiding outcomes detrimental to the region.

II. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS ON ADVISORY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

On 8 February 2011, the Secretary-General submitted to the Human Rights Council his report on advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights (A/HRC/16/66), including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Excerpts from the Introduction and the section on the Middle East and North Africa region are reproduced below:

I. Introduction

1. The Secretary-General submits to the Commission on Human Rights and, subsequently to the Human Rights Council, an annual report on technical cooperation in the field of human rights, reflecting the discussions of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. The Council, in its decision 2/102, requested the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue with the fulfilment of their activities, in accordance with all previous decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, and to update the relevant reports and studies. The present report is therefore submitted as an update of the previous report,¹ and focuses on the work of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund in 2010.

2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had previously interpreted decision 2/102 as extending previous Commission on Human Rights reports and providing for an annual reporting cycle. This interpretation had not received any objections to date, and the Office's interpretation was thus deemed to have received the tacit approval of Member States. However, an objection was placed on the record in 2010, albeit in the context of another report which also used decision

2/102 as the basis for its annual reporting. OHCHR has thus further reviewed the said decision, and concludes that with it, the Human Rights Council sought to fill a technical gap by ensuring that the deadlines for reports which were to be submitted to the sixty-second session of the Commission would be extended by one year, for submission to the subsequent substantive

session of the Human Rights Council. With this transition period over, and the objection now on the record to the previous interpretation of annual reporting cycles, if the Human Rights Council wishes to see a continuation of this reporting mandate, a new Human Rights Council resolution or decision on the matter should be tabled.

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C. Middle East and North Africa region

29. The Board was given an overview of OHCHR field presences in the Middle East and North Africa region. It learned about the projects and activities funded by the Voluntary Fund in the region, including strategies within the context of technical cooperation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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31. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories the extent and complexity of the human rights challenges has required a high

¹ A/HRC/13/61.

degree of adaptability on the part of the field presence. The Board was informed that the main priorities for OHCHR in the Occupied Palestinian Territories centre on accountability, the right to life and security of person, freedom of movement and discrimination. It was further informed regarding the OHCHR leadership of the Protection Cluster Working Group in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as the Office's monitoring capabilities and

activities, in response to the Human Rights Council's requests. With respect to monitoring, the urgent need for OHCHR to give East Jerusalem increased attention was stressed. The field presence's continuing provision of technical cooperation services and capacity-building activities to the Palestinian authorities were noted.

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III. WORLD BANK AND OTHER DONORS WILL FUND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN GAZA

On 9 February 2011, the World Bank issued a Project Information Document that outlines a plan to improve solid waste disposal services in the middle and southern Gaza Strip (World Bank Report No. AB6166). The objective(s) and description of the project are reproduced below:

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2. Proposed objective(s)

The overall project objective is to improve solid waste disposal services in the middle and southern Gaza Strip. This objective will be met through the provision of efficient waste management and environmentally friendly sanitary waste disposal services in middle and southern Joint Services Councils (JSCs) member municipalities which could be extended to other potential client municipalities in the Gaza Strip.

3. Preliminary description

The project cost is estimated at US\$25 million and Bank's contribution would be about US\$10 million. A beneficiary contribution of about US\$1.5 million equivalent for land acquisition and incremental operating cost is expected. Furthermore, donors' contribution in the order of US\$13.5 million equivalent is estimated to be required. Several donors have already expressed interest in cofinancing this project, including the

European Union, French Development Agency and Islamic Development Bank. Specific commitment is expected with the finalization of the feasibility study and clear identification of needed investments. This project would be implemented over a period of five years and consists of the following components:

Component 1: Infrastructure Development (US\$18m) for constructing a sanitary landfill (including land acquisition) and at least one transfer station; sanitary closure of dump sites in the targeted area; and provision of collection equipment and containers, waste management equipment at the landfill and transfer station(s);

Component 2: Institutional Strengthening (US\$1m) for improving the institutional capacity of participating JSCs in solid waste collection and disposal services and sustainable cost recovery; strengthening monitoring and reporting on environmental aspects of transfer stations,

the new landfill facility, and the closure and rehabilitation for interim use of dump sites; and public awareness on solid waste management at the regional and local levels;

Component 3: Pilot development of waste recycling and composting systems (US\$3 million), for feasibility studies, technical assistance and financing of pilot

waste recycling and composting schemes; and

Component 4: Project Management (estimated at US\$3 million), for incremental operating cost, Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF) management fees, and technical assistance in public awareness, construction supervision and monitoring and evaluation.

IV. HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COMMENTS ON VISIT TO ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 6 to 11 February, 2011. Upon conclusion of her visit, Ms. Pillay held a press conference in Jerusalem on 11 February. Excerpts from her opening remarks are reproduced below:

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I met Palestinian victims of human rights violations in a variety of locations in the Occupied Palestine Territory including East Jerusalem and several towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza. I and my team also met with victims in Sderot, West Jerusalem and the Negev desert. They explained their extreme hardships to us with great patience and dignity, and left me with a profound impression of the difficult human rights situation of so many civilians, because of the conflict, occupation and discriminatory laws and practices.

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I wish now to outline some of those international legal principles, relating to the occupation of Palestinian territory, before moving on to some more specific issues both in the Occupied Palestine Territory and in Israel itself.

The settlement of Israeli citizens in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is clearly prohibited under international law. As a result, all State actions in support of the establishment and maintenance of the settlements, including incentives to create them and the establishment of infrastructure to support them, are illegal under international law. They should be stopped altogether. The idea that a partial or temporary halt is a valuable concession in the peace process, to be traded against something else, is turning the law on its head.

The annexation of East Jerusalem contravenes customary international law, as confirmed by Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. This has also been recognized by the International Court of Justice. Because of its illegality, the annexation has not been recognized by any State. Under international law, East Jerusalem remains part of the West Bank and is occupied territory.

All settlement-related activities, and any legal or administrative decision or practice that directly or indirectly coerce Palestinians to leave East Jerusalem, including evictions, demolitions, forced displacements and cancellation of residence permits on a discriminatory basis, should be halted and restrictions on access to East Jerusalem by other West Bank inhabitants should be lifted. The confiscation or expropriation of private property in the occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, is in almost all cases also illegal. East Jerusalem is being steadily drained of its Palestinian inhabitants, in clear-cut defiance of Security Council resolutions.

The International Court of Justice, in its 2004 advisory opinion, stated that establishing the wall, or barrier, inside occupied territory is prohibited under international law. Some 85 per cent of the wall, when it is completed, will be located inside occupied territory, and therefore illegal. It will also have effectively sequestered around 9.5 per cent of West Bank territory.

The combined effects of the illegal settlements and the wall, that has been diverted illegally to protect them, have been devastating on the social, economic and cultural rights of many thousands of Palestinians. Families are divided from each other and from their neighbours, from their agricultural land and other sources of income, from their water sources and from other important infrastructure and services, including schools, health clinics and hospitals. Their new neighbours, the illegal settlers, often treat them with contempt, hostility and even physical violence. The settlers receive massive protection from Israeli security forces, but hardly any protection is being provided to the Palestinians living next door.

I have visited a few of those Palestinians affected by the wall and settlements. It is only when you learn about the cruelly cramped and circumscribed situation imposed on individual fellow human beings, and see for yourself the full-frontal assault on their dignity, that you can really begin to understand the true horror of the policies that are stifling their social, cultural and economic prospects, and crippling their morale. A striking case was that of Mr. Sabri Ghareeb, whose home was boxed in by Israeli security fences, effectively isolating him and his family from their community.

You have to see for yourself the contortions of the wall as it snakes around settlements, dividing lands and villages, sometimes boxing in single dwellings, and scarring the landscape and the lives of thousands; and you have to talk to its victims, to get a glimpse of the intensely negative impact the fragmentation of the West Bank by the wall, settlements and checkpoints is having on human rights, peace, development and the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Many of the affected Palestinians facing displacement because of the grave deterioration in their way of life, are refugees who have already been displaced once or twice before and during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

I have been struck by the complacency with which the entirely avoidable predicament of Palestinians affected by the wall and settlements is treated by Israeli authorities with whom I have discussed these issues. They tend to be brushed aside as though they are minor matters. They are not. They are clear-cut violations of human rights on a very large scale.

Another overarching human rights concern is the lack of accountability on many fronts. Individual officials and members of the security and military forces in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the de facto authorities in Gaza, have been violating international human rights law for years, with few prosecutions, successful or otherwise.

War crimes and crimes against humanity are two of the most serious crimes, and credible allegations that they have been committed must be properly investigated.

In addition, extremists among the Israeli settlers who commit abuses against their Palestinian neighbours, including both physical attacks and destruction of property, such as olive trees, and infrastructure, including mosques, tend to escape unpunished.

This culture of impunity leads to more abuses against and between civilians, stimulates anger and resentment on all sides, and impedes the peace process.

In the West Bank, I was encouraged by the strong statements of commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights made by officials at the highest level. Prime Minister Salam Fayad noted his Government's readiness to enter into a full memorandum of understanding with my Office. Ministers confirmed the willingness of the Palestinian National Authority to ensure access to detention facilities and their desire to work on a national human rights plan of action. They are already working towards implementing obligations under international human rights law with a view to subsequent ratification of international human rights treaties once statehood is achieved.

I am encouraged to learn that the latest draft of the new penal code includes provisions for abolishing the death penalty and protecting women from violence. The Minister of Justice noted the efforts to include more women in the judiciary.

However, I did express my concern to Palestinian National Authority officials relating to recent reports about arbitrary detention and ill treatment in detention, and emphasized the need to respect and protect the role of a vibrant civil society and the Independent Commission for Human Rights.

In Gaza, I visited one of the many United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools and was moved by how Palestinian children expressed their commitment to human rights, peace and reconciliation.

I commend Gaza human rights defenders and civil society organizations for their courageous efforts to promote human rights, accountability and the respect for the rule of law. In particular, I wish to salute the many organizations devoted to the rights of women in Gaza. Their work is absolutely essential. Recent crackdowns by the de facto authorities, including forced closures of NGOs as well as efforts to limit the independence and unity of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, are unacceptable. One human rights defender told me that civilians were in the "eye of the storm between Fatah and Hamas."

I also met fishermen, families and individuals in Gaza affected by the so-called buffer zone linked to the blockade. The blockade of Gaza is illegal, and is not warranted by Israel's legitimate security concerns. It must be lifted.

Rockets continue to be fired from Gaza into Israel, including at least eight since I began my visit last Sunday. I urge the militants in Gaza to halt firing rockets immediately. They are not only committing war crimes and continuing to terrorize large numbers of civilians, they are also doing a disservice to the Palestinian people by placing a major obstacle in the path of the peace process and playing into the hands of those who wish to maintain the blockade.

Yesterday, before entering Gaza, I visited Sderot in Israel and saw the long-term tension and trauma created by these indiscriminate attacks on towns in western Israel. The Mayor of Sderot asked me to hand over a letter to the Mayor of Gaza City proposing they work together to improve understanding between their communities. I applaud this initiative, and have taken steps to ensure that his letter will be delivered.

Gilad Shalit has now been held by Hamas for more than four and half years. While I was in Gaza I repeated my call for his release on humanitarian grounds, and conveyed the message that, at a minimum, regular visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and communications with his family must be permitted.

I remain troubled by numerous human rights issues, including women's rights and the use of the death penalty, related to actions by the de facto authorities in Gaza, and my concerns on these issues were also clearly conveyed to them.

Many Gazans still feel the tragic impact of Operation Cast Lead on their daily lives. Accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict remain to be addressed by all parties. I was deeply moved by the extremely distressing situation of family

members of Palestinian detainees and prisoners in Israel who have not been able to visit their relatives and loved ones for more than four years.

In Israel, I discussed a range of discrimination-related issues, including the treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, the ongoing demolition of unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, and the rhetoric and other actions apparently aimed at curbing the freedom and effectiveness of Israel's human rights defenders.

Israel is a country which prides itself on its democracy. Among the finest defenders of that democracy are the judicial system, and the extremely robust media and civil society organizations.

Israel's Supreme Court is strong and independent and has often acted as a restraint on the executive in matters relating to human rights, including for Palestinians. There are, however, question marks about the implementation of Supreme Court decisions by the army and other State authorities. During my visit, I met with both the former and current Presidents of the Supreme Court.

Discrimination is a problem that has been highlighted to me. It is most apparent in the markedly different treatment of Palestinians and settlers living side by side in the occupied territory. Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories who are suspected of crimes are dealt with by military courts, whereas settlers are dealt with under civil law.

I am concerned at the repeated demolition of "unrecognized" Bedouin villages in the Negev desert, and after meeting one man who told me his village had just been demolished for the fifteenth

time, dispatched two members of my team to visit this and neighbouring villages and report back to me. This is an issue we will continue to watch closely.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of institutional discrimination is the fact that during all my meetings with Government and State officials, I do not believe I met a single Palestinian citizen of Israel, which is quite striking in a State with a sizeable Palestinian minority.

One of my main concerns is the current pressure that is being applied to

Israel's famously strong, independent and generally very professional human rights defenders. This is manifested in a dramatic increase in inflammatory rhetoric aiming to discredit them and undermine their work. This is a very troubling development. A strong and independent civil society is, like a free media and an independent judiciary, a cornerstone of an open democratic society. Israel should defend and be proud of its civil society organizations.

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V. PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF “OPERATION CAST LEAD”

On 14 February 2011, several Palestinian human rights organizations working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory issued a joint statement urging the Human Rights Council to implement without delay the recommendations of the report on the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. This statement was circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 (A/HRC/16/NGO/91). The conclusion of the statement is reproduced below:

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Conclusion

As the United Nations body responsible for protecting and promoting universal human rights and for addressing systematic violations of international law, we urge the Member States of the Human Rights Council to:

1. Condemn the responsible parties for their failure to comply with the obligation to carry out investigations in accordance with international standards;
2. Transmit the findings of the Committee of Independent Experts, established by the Human Rights Council through resolution 13/9, to the United

Nations General Assembly and to the Secretary-General for immediate action;

3. Recommend to the United Nations General Assembly to urge the Security Council to act under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to transfer the matter to the International Criminal Court for adjudication;
4. Encourage the High Contracting Parties to comply with their legal obligations, including the exercise of universal jurisdiction, with respect to grave breaches as set forth in the Geneva Conventions of 1949; and
5. Promote the establishment of an escrow fund for Palestinian victims of “Operation Cast Lead” and request the High

Commissioner for Human Rights to report on any pending issues regarding its

implementation.

VI. SECURITY COUNCIL FAILS TO ADOPT RESOLUTION ON CESSATION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 18 February 2011, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution(S/2011/24) that called for the immediate and complete cessation of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The resolution was not adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member (United States). The text of the draft resolution is reproduced below:

The Security Council,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), and 1850 (2008),

Reaffirming the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories occupied since 1967,

Reaffirming that all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of peace on the basis of the two-State solution,

Condemning the continuation of settlement activities by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of all other measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Territory, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions,

Bearing in mind also the obligation under the Quartet road map, endorsed by its

resolution 1515 (2003), for a freeze by Israel of all settlement activity, including “natural growth”, and the dismantlement of all settlement outposts erected since March 2001,

Reiterating its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders,

Taking note of the strong support expressed by the Quartet for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for the resolution of all final status issues within one year,

Stressing the urgency of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace on the basis of the relevant resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli settlements established in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace;

2. *Reiterates* its demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard;

3. *Calls upon* both parties to act on the basis of international law and their previous agreements and obligations, including under the road map, aimed, inter alia, at improving the situation on the ground, building confidence and creating the conditions necessary for promoting the peace process;

4. *Calls upon* all parties to continue, in the interest of the promotion of peace and security, with their negotiations on the final status issues in the Middle East peace

process according to its agreed terms of reference and within the time frame specified by the Quartet in its statement of 21 September 2010;

5. *Urges in this regard* the intensification of international and regional diplomatic efforts to support and invigorate the peace process towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;

6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

VII. UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY CONDEMNS DEMOLITIONS IN KHIRBET TANA

The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Maxwell Gaylard, issued a statement on 21 February 2011, denouncing the demolition of temporary shelters in Khirbet Tana. Excerpts from Mr. Gaylard's statement are reproduced below:

The United Nations condemns the demolition of temporary tented structures sheltering families from the weather in Khirbet Tana. This is the second such incident affecting the community this month.

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Commenting on this latest demolition, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mr. Maxwell Gaylard, who visited Khirbet Tana on Monday, 21

February 2011, said: "if the authorities ultimately responsible for these demolitions could see the devastating impact on vulnerable Palestinian communities, they might reflect upon the inhumanity of their actions." Mr. Gaylard added that "under international law, Israel, as the occupying power in the OPT is prohibited from destroying property belonging to individuals or communities except when absolutely required by military operations".

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VIII. SECRETARY-GENERAL REPORTS ON THE SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN

In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/6, the Secretary-General issued a report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women between 1 September 2009 and 30 September 2010 (E/CN.6/2011/6). The conclusions and recommendations are reproduced below:

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

62. During the period under review, the overall humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained challenging. Despite improvements in education for women, there was little positive evidence of their social, economic and legal empowerment. The continued closures, checkpoints and roadblocks limited the access of Palestinian women and girls to health-care services, employment and other opportunities. The recent relaxation of movement restrictions should be continued.

63. Efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to bring about a just and lasting negotiated agreement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through direct negotiations. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the need for more systematic efforts by all parties to ensure women's full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in the region, including in the permanent status negotiations.

64. United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health and employment. Special efforts should be made to support the Palestinian Development Plan for 2011-2013, including its cross-sectoral national gender strategy. Enhanced efforts should be

made to achieve women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including in the political and economic spheres.

65. In order to support women's and girls' economic and political empowerment and well-being, increased attention and continued support is needed to improve access to quality education and training that translate into employment opportunities. Strengthened efforts are needed to address stereotypical attitudes that have an impact upon educational and training choices, including through revisions of school curricula and textbooks, and through targeted efforts to combat harmful practices such as early marriage, which may contribute to girls dropping out of school.

66. When supporting employment for women, attention should be paid to ensure that assistance programmes and projects do not reinforce traditional gender divisions of labour, which limit job opportunities for both women and men. Concrete actions are required to increase the participation of Palestinian women, in particular young women, in the labour force. Assistance provided by United Nations entities should not only focus on expanding women's labour force participation into non-traditional sectors but also assist women in better seizing the full benefits and profits from their economic activities. The issue of women's economic empowerment needs to address engagement by women in the full range of activities involved in bringing a

good or service to the final consumer, in order to enable them to reach beyond the local market to national and international markets. United Nations partners need to systematically address the bottlenecks preventing women's advancement in those areas, including women's lack of access to productive resources and opportunities; women's limited access to effective transportation of goods; and lack of capacity, resulting from limited education and training opportunities.

67. In order to facilitate the mobility of Palestinian women for personal or employment-related reasons, attention should also be given to increasing their access to safe and affordable means of transport, including public transport to semi-urban and rural areas. The public transportation system could be reviewed and analysed in order to ensure that schedules and connections are supportive of both women's and men's transport needs.

68. Food security continued to be a high priority. Access of women and men to employment often contributes to successful strategies to address food insecurity. Strong, comprehensive measures, including safety nets, employment and/or other income-generating activities are therefore needed to ensure that women have access to safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food, and to increase the access to technologies, credit and markets by women smallholder farmers.

69. Enhanced efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against Palestinian women and girls. In addition to establishing provisions for penalizing and punishing perpetrators, legal frameworks on violence against women should mandate support for victims and survivors, prevention measures and training for relevant officials. Ending impunity for

violence against women requires awareness-raising, training for law enforcement officials and gender-sensitive procedures and processes. The Palestinian authorities and United Nations entities should collaborate to provide support and services for women and girl victims and survivors of violence. The legal framework needs to be harmonized with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and measures for its effective implementation need to be implemented.

70. The Palestinian Authority and some United Nations entities have taken measures to mainstream gender perspectives into their work, including through gender-sensitive strategies and programmes. Further efforts are needed to fully integrate a gender perspective into all international assistance programmes through gender analysis, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender-responsive budgeting processes. Additional coordinated efforts are needed to assess the impact of assistance and the extent to which it addresses and matches women's needs. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to benefit Palestinian women and girls and should systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.

71. Some progress has been made in recent years in addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women in United Nations studies and reports on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such publications should systematically focus specific attention on gender equality perspectives and incorporate information on the situation of women and girls, including in reports by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli

Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Special

Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, as well as in other relevant reports of the Secretary-General.

IX. SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL

On 24 February 2011, Robert Serry, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.6488). Excerpts from Mr. Serry's briefing are reproduced below:

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Adversity on the ground has not stopped the Palestinian Authority from forging ahead with its State-building agenda. With significant achievements realized over the past years and further reforms under way, it is my clear view that the strong institutions now established represent the basis of a State-in-waiting. The further realization of progress is fundamentally constrained by the Israeli measures of occupation that deny territorial contiguity and inhibit freedom of movement. The continued divisions among the Palestinians are also a serious concern in that regard.

Palestinian security forces continued to make strides in the maintenance of law and order in the West Bank. Economic activity is on the rise and we note positively Israel's removal of some further obstacles to support this trend: easier access to Nablus via the Huwwara checkpoint; increased tourist access to Bethlehem; and more predictable access for meat and dairy products into East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

On 4 February, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed with Quartet

Representative Blair on a package of measures designed to help improve Palestinian livelihoods and support economic growth in both the West Bank and in Gaza. It is imperative that these steps be facilitated and implemented in full. More and speedier easing measures by the Government of Israel are urgently needed to shore up the State-building effort. The confidence built over the past years should enable Israel to further roll back elements of occupation.

My visit to Hebron on 25 January impressed on me the importance of enabling the Palestinian Authority to develop in Area C. I visited the densely populated neighbourhood of Qaizun in Area A, overlooking empty space in Area C next to Israeli settlements. The Governor and the Mayor of Hebron underlined the importance and urgency of using at least some of that area to accommodate Hebron's natural growth by expanding its residential and industrial area there. Such circumstances can be found in many more Palestinian urban centres. I urge Israel to address these pressing Palestinian needs.

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I was in Gaza last week, on 16 February, and it remains a high priority in all my engagement to seek to improve the situation in Gaza on the basis of respect for calm and a significant improvement in socio-economic conditions, which have deteriorated so badly in recent years in the aftermath of the Hamas takeover and the Israeli-imposed blockade.

I regret to report to the Council that the reporting period was marked by an increase in violence, with an escalation of rocket attacks emanating from Gaza and Israeli air raids and repeated confrontations in the border area with Israel. Nineteen mortar shells and 15 rockets were fired indiscriminately from Gaza towards Israeli civilian areas. As recently as yesterday, three Grad rockets were fired at the city of Be'er Sheva, damaging a house. On 31 January, three Grad rockets were fired, narrowly missing a wedding celebration in Netivot. Also on 23 February, a 10- year-old girl was killed in the southern Gaza Strip when an explosive device went off while being prepared by militants. We condemn rocket attacks and once again call for their immediate cessation. We are urging the de facto authorities to intensify their efforts to maintain calm.

Israeli forces responded overnight to the recent rocket attack with air raids against Hamas facilities in the Strip. On 23 February, Israeli forces also used tank fire against militants who were allegedly detonating an explosive device near the border fence and firing mortars. The operation injured 11 Palestinians, including militants from Islamic Jihad, killing one. During the night of 17 February, three Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli security forces near the border fence in Gaza as they were allegedly planting explosive

devices, while the de facto authorities contend that they were fishermen.

During the reporting period, Israel conducted 10 further incursions and four air strikes into Gaza, in which two Palestinian militants and 27 Palestinian civilians were injured. We call on Israel to exercise maximum restraint and to ensure the protection of civilians. All parties must respect international humanitarian law.

We remain concerned at the depressed economic situation in Gaza and the continuing impact of Israeli closure measures. At the same time, I note positively the Israeli approval of 14 additional United Nations infrastructure projects in Gaza, including seven United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools. That brings to 20 the total number of approved UNRWA schools. The total amount of approved projects now stands at \$155.4 million. It is important that implementation now proceed smoothly, which will require the streamlined entry of materials and adequate capacity at the crossings.

Import levels are more significant than before Israel's policy adjustment in June 2010, but are far from meeting pre-2007 levels. The needs in Gaza remain vast. We hope that both import and export levels can be scaled up within the framework of the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

The United Nations is also in discussions with the Government of Israel on a process, led by the Palestinian Authority with United Nations monitoring, for the commercial import of construction materials for the private sector.

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In my December briefing (see S/PV.6448), I indicated that I believed that the credibility of the international community, including the Quartet's, would be at stake in 2011. It is now all the more urgent and crucial that it respond to this test. To that end, the Quartet intends to engage the parties in serious talks, including on substance, and to support them in finding

ways back to the negotiating table. I also believe that there should be a readiness to offer more concrete suggestions for those negotiations, if that is what it will take to enable decisive progress towards peace. I hope that the leaders will join in that effort by acting responsibly and in keeping with their peoples' aspirations for stability and peace. That, in my view, is the right lesson to draw from the changes that are taking place in the region.