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I. UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY ISSUES REPORT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY IN 2010

On 1 November 2011, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East issued a report on socio-economic developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2010. The Executive Summary of the report is reproduced below.

Executive summary

Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory economy in 2010 suggest continued growth in output and employment, on the one hand, and an underlying labour market unable to absorb a labour force growing in excess of 3.5 per cent per year, that is, at a rate more rapid than average population growth. The private sector led growth in output and employment in both the West Bank and Gaza but in both cases the spending power of large public sector work forces, as well as direct public sector spending, contributed fundamentally to private sector growth. Private sector growth was led in both the West Bank and Gaza by construction activity. In Gaza, the construction surge helped to partially alleviate a deficit in residential housing caused by years of siege and the inability to import significant amounts of building materials. Despite above average gross domestic product growth in Gaza, the divergence between its economy and that of the West Bank remained stark, with severely constricted growth in output and much higher levels of unemployment in Gaza.

Gross domestic product

There was continued macroeconomic growth in 2010 with conventionally measured real gross domestic product rising an estimated 9.2 per cent. Excluding formal accounting items, which do not add to output, real gross domestic product rose by 8 per cent. The private sector accounted for two thirds of the gross domestic product

growth. More than half of private sector growth was accounted for by productive activities, particularly construction and agriculture, with private services contributing about 27.8 per cent and commerce representing 21.2 per cent of gross domestic product growth during the year. Continued rapid growth in bank financing—particularly consumer and mortgage lending—boosted domestic demand for goods and services.

At 15 per cent, gross domestic product growth in Gaza was estimated to be twice as that in the West Bank. Moderate growth in employment from a greatly diminished economic base accounted for this relatively rapid growth rate. Nonetheless, the West Bank accounted for about 64 per cent of overall gross domestic product growth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2010. In both the West Bank and Gaza, the private sector played the leading role in the reported growth. In the case of the West Bank, a boost in construction activity and a bumper olive harvest fuelled growth, even as the manufacturing base shrank. In the case of Gaza, the informal tunnel economy made an important contribution to a more than tripling of construction activity, allowing for the import of relatively inexpensive building materials, raw materials and fuels. In both the West Bank and Gaza there was marginal relaxation in the degree of severity of Israeli restrictions on mobility and access. A significant expansion in bank credit to the private sector also contributed to better economic results.

Per capita gross domestic product growth in the West Bank is estimated at about 5 per cent and at about 11.4 per cent in Gaza in 2010 in real terms. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that, by 2009, real per capita gross domestic product in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had recovered to 1994 levels. Substantial growth in 2010 further contributed to returning to levels of average income witnessed in the late 1990s, more than a decade ago.

Labour market trends

In 2010 and on average, employment grew 3.7 per cent in the Occupied Palestinian Territory relative to 2009, an increase of about 26,725 jobs. At the same time, broad unemployment grew 3.2 per cent, an addition of about 10,000 persons, raising the total number of unemployed to an average of 318,000 in 2010. Refugee employment declined 3 per cent, while non-refugee employment grew by about 7.5 per cent. At the same time, the number of unemployed refugees declined by 1.1 per cent. This was due to a decline, for the second year in a row, in the refugee labour force participation rate. Meanwhile, the number of unemployed non-refugees rose by 6.9 per cent. On a regional basis, employment in the West Bank grew by 4.2 per cent, all of it accounted for by non-refugees, while in Gaza, overall employment rose 2.3 per cent with non-refugees accounting for the bulk of employment growth there. The number of unemployed in the West Bank rose 4.5 per cent, all of it among non-refugees while the number of unemployed in Gaza rose 1.8 per cent, mostly among refugees.

More than 83 per cent of job gains in 2010 were in the private sector, with employment in Israel and settlements accounting for the remainder of the growth. Public sector employment declined by about

1.1 per cent relative to 2009. The private sector accounted for 79 per cent of new jobs in the West Bank and all new employment in Gaza in 2010. This was a major change for Gaza, where the vast bulk of new jobs in 2009 were generated by the public sector. Construction was the single most important source of job growth in both the West Bank and Gaza in 2010, followed in Gaza by agriculture and in the West Bank by private services. Non-refugees dominated job growth in the private sectors of both regions as refugee labour force participation continued to decline.

Both core and broad unemployment rates receded marginally in 2010. The narrow International Labour Organization rate of unemployment averaged 24.5 per cent in 2009 and 23.7 per cent in 2010. The broad unemployment rate fell from 30 per cent in 2009 to 29.9 per cent in 2010. Despite good job growth, unemployment rates remained stubbornly high and among the highest in the world. Broad unemployment in the West Bank averaged 23.4 per cent in 2010, slightly higher than its 2009 rate. In Gaza, the broad rate of unemployment averaged 43.6 per cent in 2010, about 0.1 percentage points less than in 2009.

The International Labour Organization unemployment rates of both refugees and non-refugees declined, with that for non-refugees falling faster. In broad terms, the refugee unemployment rate rose marginally to 35.7 per cent while that for non-refugees declined 0.1 percentage points to 26.6 per cent. Thus, the unemployment rate gap between the two groups increased to the disadvantage of refugees in 2010.

Youth employment expanded some 2.2 per cent, far more slowly than for the labour force as a whole. Youth unemployment, on the other hand, grew by 8.4 per cent, significantly faster than for the

population as a whole, such that youth accounted for 43.4 per cent of all unemployed persons in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. West Bank youth fared better, with 4.8 per cent employment growth and a 4.6 per cent decline in the number of unemployed. By contrast, Gaza youth lost 13.4 per cent of their employment base and the unemployed among them rose 10.2 per cent. The broad youth unemployment rate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2010 averaged 47.7 per cent, nearly 18 percentage points above the Occupied Palestinian Territory average. On a regional basis, the average youth unemployment rate in the West Bank was 34.9 per cent in 2010, while that in Gaza reached an unprecedented 70.5 per cent, among the very highest in the world.

The number of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory labour force fell about 1 per cent in 2010. The number of employed women declined 2.3 per cent, while the number of unemployed women rose 1.8 per cent. The average broad unemployment rate for women of 32.4 per cent was significantly above the overall average. Until 2009, women's unemployment rates were consistently below average. Women only achieved meagre employment gains in agriculture, commerce and hotel and restaurant activities, while there were losses in public employment. About 18.6 per cent of adult women in the West Bank participated in the workforce outside of the home, compared with 11.6 per cent in Gaza in 2010. The West Bank female labour force increased 3.4 per cent versus an 11.8 per cent decline in Gaza.

Despite continued employment growth, the average real monthly wage of employed persons declined 3.7 per cent. This consisted of a 2.2 per cent decline in the West Bank and a 9.3 per cent decline in

Gaza, with real wage deterioration worse among refugees in 2010.

Looking ahead

Despite the noteworthy growth in gross domestic product and employment in 2010, the fundamental context of the Occupied Palestinian Territory economy for well over a decade has been the inability to fully utilize human and natural resources to the greatest advantage, mainly due to the imposed policies of the Government of Israel. Estimates generated by the International Monetary Fund suggest that, had the Occupied Palestinian Territory not been subjected to restrictions on resource use and the free mobility of people, vehicles and goods in the period after 1994, the level of per capita gross domestic product would have been between 50 and 100 per cent greater than what they were in 2010. The important growth witnessed in both 2009 and 2010 did not change the basic context of an economy restrained by an occupying power.

Private sector growth remained severely constrained and vulnerable to Israel's tactical and strategic political objectives. As the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, the United Nations and others have noted repeatedly over the past decade, the pace of growth and recovery is intimately dependent on freedom of mobility within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and between the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the rest of the world. While 2009 and 2010 witnessed some reduced mobility restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza, those restrictions remained significant and the blockade imposed on Gaza remained severe. Moreover, Occupied Palestinian Territory external trade remained greatly constrained by the policies, stated and unstated, of the Government of Israel. Such conditions are the main obstacle to higher

levels of private sector investment and employment.

As repeatedly noted in previous reports in this series, good governance practices and resource constraints dictate that the Occupied Palestinian Territory public sector cannot absorb significant amounts of additional employment in the future. Indeed, 2010 witnessed a marginal decline in total public employment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The private sector must therefore bear the brunt of long-term, sustainable employment generation. Given the robust growth in the working-age population, it is estimated that an average of 127,000 jobs would have to be created and sustained in the Occupied Palestinian Territory each year between 2011 and 2015 in order to reduce the narrow International Labour Organization unemployment rate to 10 per cent, the average rate in the Middle East. This compares to an average annual job growth of about 38,000 in 2009 and 2010, which were relatively good years. In other words, employment generation would have to be more than three times as fast as it has been in the past two years.

Uncertainty in the political environment, movement restrictions and inaccessibility to land and water resources, the continuing blockade on Gaza and the decline in incomes over the past decade have dampened investor expectations about the future, discouraging private sector investment in productive activities. The shift in the production pattern, as noted by the International Monetary Fund, is one in which private services account for a higher share of private sector gross domestic product, while agriculture and manufacturing account for a much smaller share, than was the case 15 years ago. This reflects the regime of severe border and

mobility restrictions on people and commodities rather than the comparative advantage of the local economy.

Low levels of private investment have coincided with low levels of public investment. The bulk of very significant donor support to the Palestinian Authority since 2000 has been absorbed as wages and other compensation for public sector employees or as assistance to repair damages caused by Israeli military incursions. Only a very small portion has been invested in improving education, health and social welfare services; in fostering an enabling legal, regulatory and institutional environment that would encourage private sector development and growth; or in improving public infrastructure. The imbalance between employee compensation and institutional and infrastructural development continued to hamper development in both the West Bank and Gaza.

It must be reiterated that unsettled politics, both internal and with regard to a final status settlement with the Government of Israel, remain the main obstacle to recovery from the prolonged socio-economic crisis. The strategic, long-term and sustainable development of the Palestinian economy can occur if a political solution is reached that allows for greater certainty, greater access to indigenous land and water resources and markets, greater internal and external mobility and, thus, more coherent planning and investment. Many of the problems facing the public and private sectors are rooted in political uncertainties and continuing occupation. An equitable and permanent settlement of these issues would be the most important contribution to sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

II. UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION DIRECTOR-GENERAL ISSUES STATEMENT ON WITHHOLDING OF FUNDS BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Irina Bokova, issued a statement on 2 November 2011 regarding the decision by the United States of America to withhold its dues to the Organization, the text of which is reproduced below.

In this time of economic crisis and social transformation, I believe that the vital work of UNESCO to promote global stability and democratic values is in the core interests of the United States of America.

The United States is a critical partner in the work of UNESCO. The withholding of United States dues and other financial contributions, required by United States law, will weaken the effectiveness of UNESCO and undermine its ability to build free and open societies.

United States funding helps UNESCO to develop and sustain free and competitive media in Egypt, Iraq and Tunisia. In Afghanistan, United States support is helping UNESCO to teach thousands of police officers to read and write. UNESCO literacy programmes in other areas of conflict give people the critical thinking skills and confidence they need to fight violent extremism. To sustain the democratic spirit of the Arab Spring, UNESCO is training journalists to cover elections objectively.

Across the world, we stand up for each journalist who is attacked or killed, because we are the United Nations agency with the mandate to protect freedom of expression. In Washington, earlier this year, I awarded the UNESCO Press Freedom Prize to an imprisoned Iranian journalist, Ahmad Zeidabadi.

UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to promote

Holocaust education worldwide. Using funding provided by the United States and Israel, UNESCO is developing curricula to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten. Last February, I led a group of more than 150 political and religious leaders, mostly from Arab and Muslim countries, on a historic visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. I still recall the words of Dr. Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia, who said: "We must teach our young people in mosques, churches and synagogues what happened here".

With United States support, we put science at the service of people. UNESCO is leading a global effort to expand an ocean-based tsunami warning system. In January, this system saved tens of thousands of lives when a tsunami hit Japan. In the Middle East, the UNESCO Sesame Programme enables world-class research and builds scientific and cultural bridges between neighbouring countries, including Egypt and Israel.

The Government of the United States recognizes the value of all this work. To quote the State Department: "United States engagement with UNESCO serves a wide range of our national interests on education, science, culture and communications issues...we will work with Congress to ensure that United States interests and influence are preserved".

UNESCO is encouraged that the United States will maintain its membership in the Organization and hopes that a

resolution to the funding issue will ultimately be identified. Until that happens, it will be impossible for us to maintain our current level of activity.

The announced withholding of United States dues owed for 2011 will immediately affect our ability to deliver programmes in

critical areas: achieving universal education, supporting new democracies and fighting extremism. So I call upon the United States administration, Congress and the American people to find a way forward and continue support for UNESCO in these turbulent times.

III. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY

The statement below on Israeli settlement activity (SG/SM/13918) was issued on 2 November 2011 by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the decisions announced by the Government of Israel in response to the decision of the UNESCO General Conference in favour of Palestinian membership. Israeli settlement activity is contrary to international law and the road map and prejudices final status negotiations. The Secretary-General calls upon the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity and to continue to transfer value added tax and customs revenues that belong to the Palestinian Authority and are essential to enable it to function, in line with Israel's obligations.

As the Secretary-General has indicated, he is also concerned at the implications for UNESCO's funding of the

decision of the UNESCO General Conference. The decision was the prerogative of Member States, and he wishes to work with them on practical solutions to preserve organization's financial resources.

The Secretary-General is worried at the trajectory of developments between Israel and the Palestinians and calls upon the parties to act responsibly and seriously for peace. He calls upon both parties to refrain from provocations and work with the Quartet towards serious proposals on borders and security in the coming three months, in the context of a shared commitment to resume direct negotiations.

IV. SECURITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION ISSUES REPORT ON PALESTINE'S APPLICATION FOR UNITED NATIONS MEMBERSHIP

On 11 November 2011, the Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members issued its report regarding the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations (S/2011/705) the text of which is reproduced below.

1. At its 6624th meeting, on 28 September 2011, the Security Council had before it the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations (S/2011/592). In accordance with

rule 59 of the provisional rules of procedure and in the absence of a proposal to the contrary, the President of the Council (Lebanon) referred the application to the

Committee on the Admission of New Members for examination and report.

2. At its 109th and 110th meetings, held on 30 September and 3 November 2011, respectively, the Committee considered the application.

3. Following the 109th meeting of the Committee, the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of October (Nigeria) convened five informal meetings of the Committee, four of which were held at the expert level, to carefully consider whether Palestine met the specific criteria for admission to membership contained in Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations. Experts considered whether Palestine met the criteria for statehood, was a peace-loving State, and was willing and able to carry out the obligations contained in the Charter.

4. In the course of the meetings of the Committee, differing views were expressed. The view was expressed that the applicant fulfils all the criteria set out in the Charter. Questions were raised as to whether the applicant meets all of the Charter membership requirements. The view was also expressed that deliberations should take into account the broader political context of the matter at hand.

5. It was stated that the criteria set out in Article 4 of the Charter were the only factors that could be taken into consideration in the Committee's deliberations. In support of this position, reference was made to the Advisory Opinion of 28 May 1948 of the International Court of Justice, on the Conditions of Admission of a State to Membership in the United Nations (Article 4 of the Charter).

6. It was also asserted that the Committee's work, whatever its outcome, should be mindful of the broader political

context. The view was expressed that a two-State solution via a negotiated settlement remained the only option for a long-term sustainable peace and that final status issues had to be resolved through negotiations. Support was expressed for a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders, resulting from political negotiations, leading to an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. It was stressed that Palestine's right to self-determination and recognition is not contrary to Israel's right to exist.

7. It was stated that the Committee's work should not harm the prospects of the resumption of peace talks, particularly in the light of the Quartet statement on 23 September 2011 that had set out a clear timetable for the resumption of negotiations. Similarly, it was stated that the prospect of negotiations should not delay the Security Council's consideration of Palestine's application. It was stated that Palestine's application was neither detrimental to the political process nor an alternative to negotiations. It was also stated that the Palestinian application would not bring the parties closer to peace. It was further stated that the question of the recognition of Palestinian statehood could not and should not be subject to the outcome of negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, and that, otherwise, Palestinian statehood would be made dependent on the approval of Israel, which would grant the occupying Power a right of veto over the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, which has been recognized by the General Assembly as an inalienable right since 1974. Concerns were raised in relation to Israel's continued settlement activities. The view was expressed that those activities were considered illegal under international law and were an obstacle to a comprehensive peace.

8. In relation to the application of Palestine (S/2011/592), attention was drawn to the letter received by the Secretary-General from the President of Palestine on 23 September 2011, which contained a declaration—made in a formal instrument—stating that the State of Palestine was a peace-loving nation; that it accepted the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations; and that it solemnly undertook to fulfil them.

9. On the criterion of statehood, reference was made to the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which declares that a State as a person of international law should possess a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other States.

10. With regard to the requirements of a permanent population and a defined territory, the view was expressed that Palestine fulfilled these criteria. It was stressed that the lack of precisely settled borders was not an obstacle to statehood.

11. Questions were raised, however, regarding Palestine's control over its territory, in view of the fact that Hamas was the de facto authority in the Gaza Strip. It was affirmed that the Israeli occupation was a factor preventing the Palestinian government from exercising full control over its territory. However, the view was expressed that occupation by a foreign Power did not imply that the sovereignty of an occupied territory was to be transferred to the occupying Power.

12. With regard to the requirement of a government, the view was expressed that Palestine fulfilled this criterion. However, it was stated that Hamas was in control of 40 per cent of the population of Palestine; therefore the Palestinian Authority could not be considered to have effective government

control over the claimed territory. It was stressed that the Palestine Liberation Organization, and not Hamas, was the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

13. Reference was made to reports of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, which had concluded that Palestine's governmental functions were now sufficient for the functioning of a State.

14. With regard to the requirement that a State have the capacity to enter into relations with other States, the view was expressed that Palestine fulfilled this criterion. It was recalled that Palestine had been accepted into membership in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Group of 77 and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In addition, over 130 States had recognized Palestine as an independent sovereign State. Questions were raised, however, regarding the authority of the Palestinian Authority to engage in relations with other States, since under the Oslo Accords the Palestinian Authority could not engage in foreign relations.

15. With regard to the requirement that an applicant be "peace-loving", the view was expressed that Palestine fulfilled this criterion in view of its commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was further stated that Palestine's fulfilment of this criterion was also evident in its commitment to resuming negotiations on all final status issues on the basis of the internationally endorsed terms of reference, relevant United Nations

resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map.

16. Questions were raised as to whether Palestine was indeed a peace-loving State, since Hamas refused to renounce terrorism and violence, and had the stated aim of destroying Israel. Reference was made, on the other hand, to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Namibia, of 1971, which stated that the only acts that could be attributable to a State were those of the State's recognized authority.

17. With regard to the requirement that an applicant accept the obligations contained in the Charter and be able and willing to carry out those obligations, the view was expressed that Palestine fulfilled these criteria, as was evident, *inter alia*, from the solemn declaration to this effect contained in its application. It was recalled that in 1948, when considering the application of Israel for membership, it had been argued that Israel's solemn pledge to carry out its obligations under the Charter was sufficient to meet this criterion.

18. The view was also expressed that the Charter required more than a verbal commitment by an applicant to carry out its Charter obligations; an applicant had to show a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to refrain from the threat or the use of force in the conduct of its international relations. In this connection, it was stressed that Hamas had not accepted these obligations.

19. The view was expressed that the Committee should recommend to the Council that Palestine be admitted to membership in the United Nations. A different view was expressed that the membership application could not be supported at this time and an abstention was envisaged in the event of a vote. Yet another view expressed was that there were serious questions about the application, that the applicant did not meet the requirements for membership and that a favourable recommendation to the General Assembly would not be supported.

20. Further, it was suggested that, as an intermediate step, the General Assembly should adopt a resolution by which Palestine would be made an Observer State.

21. In summing up the debate at the 110th meeting of the Committee, the Chair stated that the Committee was unable to make a unanimous recommendation to the Security Council.

22. The Committee on the Admission of New Members concluded its consideration of the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations.

23. At its 111th meeting, the Committee approved the present report on its consideration of the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations.

V. UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 21 November 2011, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.6662). Excerpts of the briefing are reproduced below.

During the reporting period, both parties engaged separately with the Quartet in the framework of the 23 September statement. While that is constructive, direct negotiations without preconditions, in which the parties would be expected to table territorial and security proposals within 90 days, are still not taking place. Provocations continue to damage confidence and make resuming direct negotiations very difficult. Settlements are expanding, undermining the territorial basis for a future Palestinian State and the credibility of Palestinian moderates.

The Palestinian bid for membership in the United Nations is viewed negatively by Israel, and the Palestinian Authority's tax revenue is being withheld by the Government of Israel. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) funding has also been affected. Palestinian unity has not moved forward, though there is speculation about future developments. Meanwhile, Gaza has once again witnessed dangerous violence, including rocket fire by militants into Israel and Israeli strikes.

President Mahmoud Abbas has publicly warned that the status quo cannot endure. We have to find a meaningful diplomatic path forward. As the Secretary-General's envoy, I am engaged with both parties and my Quartet and regional partners in that effort. His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan paid an official visit to Ramallah today to hold consultations with President Abbas, underscoring his concern at the current situation and his support for the

Palestinian Authority and a resumption of meaningful negotiations for the creation of a Palestinian State.

The 23 September statement of the Quartet reaffirmed the international legal basis for peace talks. It continues to provide the framework for a way forward if both parties show flexibility and responsibility. Quartet envoys and Quartet Representative Tony Blair met separately on two occasions in Jerusalem with Israeli and Palestinian representatives, on 26 October and 14 November. Quartet envoys stressed the need for the parties to avoid provocations, develop serious proposals on borders and security, and discuss them directly with each other without delay or preconditions, with active Quartet support.

The United Nations appreciates the substance that has been discussed by the Palestinian side, which shows serious intent. At the same time, we believe its potential can be realized only in direct negotiations. While we appreciate Israel's stated security concerns and its readiness to enter direct talks, we also believe that Israel should provide genuine assurances that it is willing to present serious proposals, including on territory, in the context of direct negotiations. Moreover, direct engagement should be facilitated by a conducive environment.

That remains very difficult given the lack of mutual trust and tensions on the ground. In particular, Israel continues to engage in settlement activity, including in highly sensitive areas, and demolitions of

Palestinian structures are ongoing. On 1 November, Israel announced the accelerated construction of housing units in occupied East Jerusalem after the decision by UNESCO to admit Palestine as a member. Israel subsequently publicized its intention to invite tenders for the construction of 1,557 new units in East Jerusalem and 673 units in other areas of the West Bank. On 2 November, the Secretary-General strongly criticized settlement activity, which runs contrary to international law and the road map and prejudices final status negotiations. Unilateral actions on the ground will not be recognized by the international community and must cease.

The Palestinian application for membership in the United Nations remains before the Council. Meanwhile, on 31 October, the UNESCO General Conference voted in favour of Palestinian membership. The decision was the prerogative of member States. The Secretary-General had urged that all parties approach the issue wisely in determining a course of action. Since the adoption of the decision, he has indicated that he wishes to work with member States on practical solutions to preserve the financial resources of UNESCO.

The Government of Israel reacted to the UNESCO outcome by freezing the transfer of value-added tax and customs revenues it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority pursuant to the Paris Protocol. Those funds amount to approximately \$100 million per month, and represent two-thirds of the Palestinian Authority's annual revenues. Withholding that level of funding would cripple any Government, let alone an authority under occupation. If the funds are not immediately unblocked, this action will threaten the State-building gains made by the Palestinian Authority, including the increased good governance benefiting the Palestinian people

and the development of the security forces that uphold law and order in the West Bank. The United States is also partially withholding the assistance funds that it had been providing to the Authority.

We must de-escalate this situation. In addition to acting on its settlement obligations, Israel should heed the calls of the Secretary-General and other international leaders to unfreeze transfers to the Palestinian Authority immediately, in accordance with existing agreements. Donors should also unblock their funding to the Palestinian Authority. For its part, the Palestinian Authority should find ways to contribute to the de-escalation of the situation and improving the prevailing divisive climate, including in the international arena. De-escalation will be necessary to create an environment conducive for direct talks. In this regard, as Israel prepares for a further prisoner release pursuant to the swap of two months ago, I hope that it will be mindful of the continuing appeal of the Palestinian Authority for prisoners—some of whom have been incarcerated since before the signing of the Oslo Accords—to be released.

We underscore the importance of the security efforts of the Palestinian Authority and of continued coordination. Palestinian security forces seized and defused unexploded devices on two different occasions in the reporting period. An eighth battalion of internationally trained Palestinian security forces has been deployed on the ground, bringing their number to over 4,000. In a positive gesture, 51 alleged militants being held in protective custody by the Palestinian police in the West Bank were granted amnesty by Israel on 4 November.

Weekly demonstrations continued against the barrier in the occupied West Bank, which deviates from the Green Line

in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. The route of the barrier was reportedly recently moved in the northern Jordan Valley, resulting in a de facto annexation of Palestinian land. During a speech marking the seventh anniversary of President Arafat's death, President Abbas firmly rejected violence, but called for the widest possible Palestinian "non-violent resistance". On 15 November, Palestinian activists boarded an Israeli bus near Ramallah, which headed to Jerusalem to protest travel restrictions, and seven were detained by the Israel Defense Forces.

However, violent incidents continue. Citing security concerns, the Israel Defense Forces conducted 218 operations, during which 44 Palestinians were injured, including 3 children, and 113 arrested, including a prominent West Bank Hamas leader, who was placed in administrative detention without charge for six months on 31 October.

Meanwhile, 21 settler attacks on Palestinians resulted in six injuries and the destruction of another 174 olive trees during the harvest season. On 15 November, the Israel Defense Forces arrested six Israeli settlers near Ramallah for throwing stones at Palestinian vehicles. Palestinian stone-throwing against Israeli vehicles in the West Bank resulted in three injuries, and several arrests of Palestinians. A Jewish holy site in Nablus was desecrated on 31 October.

I wish to note that the weekly average of attacks by settlers has increased by 40 per cent in 2011 compared to 2010, and by 165 per cent compared to 2009. Israel recently made some arrests in connection with previous "price-tag" incidents. On 1 and 7 November, the Israel Defense Forces demolished structures in three West Bank settlement outposts, resulting in clashes with settlers and several arrests. However, on 10 November, the Israeli

Government delayed the demolition of two unauthorized West Bank settler outposts built on private Palestinian property. Israel must remove outposts consistent with its road map commitments and provide adequate law enforcement for acts of settler violence in line with its obligations towards the Palestinian civilian population under occupation.

Preserving calm in Gaza and southern Israel continues to be crucial for improvements there and for the overall political atmosphere. The United Nations remains committed to promoting the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). The fragility of the relative calm was once again demonstrated on 26 October when a Grad rocket launched by militants in Gaza exploded near the Israeli city of Ashdod. Between 29 and 31 October, a dangerous escalation ensued. Tens of Grad and homemade rockets, as well as mortars, landed in Israel. Israel conducted air strikes in Gaza, targeting mainly Islamic Jihad militants. Throughout the episode, both Israel and the de facto Hamas authorities in Gaza signaled their desire to de-escalate. Diplomatic efforts led by Egypt helped to restore relative calm on 1 November. However, Islamic Jihad released footage purporting to show its possession of increasingly sophisticated mobile rocket launchers smuggled into the coastal strip, highlighting the need for more effective steps to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition.

During the reporting period, a total of 56 rockets, including 24 Grad rockets, and 16 mortar shells were fired into Israel, killing one Israeli civilian and injuring four others. We condemn these indiscriminate attacks, which must stop. The Israel Defense Forces fired nine tank shells and conducted 25 air strikes and four incursions into Gaza, killing 14 Palestinian militants and injuring 12 others, while two Palestinian civilian

were killed and five were injured. A 14 November Israeli air strike injured a French consular official in Gaza, as well as his daughter and pregnant wife, who miscarried. Israel must exercise maximum restraint and minimize the risk to civilians. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all to fully respect international humanitarian law.

In a welcome development, on 8 November, the Government of Israel granted four new sets of approvals for construction projects, valued at approximately \$5.5 million, to be carried out by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Sweden and the United States Agency for International Development. I also welcome the start of the delivery of aggregate, bar and cement for use by the private sector in Gaza, in a pilot arrangement that represents a significant step towards rebuilding the Gaza economy. We are urgently awaiting further approvals of vital housing projects under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

With due consideration for Israel's legitimate security concerns, I continue to call for further measures towards the lifting of the land closure on Gaza, such as imports of construction materials at scale, exports, the extension of the Gaza fishing zone, and the freedom of movement of people. Opening Gaza is vital to the well-being of Gazans and for closing gaps in supply increasingly filled by other actors, including illicit tunnel trade largely controlled by the de facto authorities. During the reporting period, the Israeli navy stopped two boats attempting to reach the Gaza Strip by sea.

Following Fatah-Hamas contacts, a further high-level meeting is being prepared to discuss the implementation of the reconciliation accord agreed in Cairo in May. The reconciliation accord envisages, inter alia, elections in May 2012, following the formation of a technocratic transitional Government. Prime Minister Fayyad, who has consistently supported reconciliation efforts, has publicly reaffirmed his long-standing position that he will not be an obstacle to an agreement on a new Government. The issues among the Palestinians remain challenging, while the substance of any reconciliation arrangement will be carefully assessed by donors. As the United Nations, we continue to support reconciliation efforts within the framework of the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the positions of the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative.

...

In conclusion, the stakes remain high. As I warned in my briefing to the Council in July (see S/PV.6590), without a credible political path forward, accompanied by more far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and its State-building agenda—and, I fear, of the two-State solution itself—cannot be taken for granted. Gaps of trust, perception and substance remain between the parties. It will not be easy to overcome them. However, I appeal to them to de-escalate, refrain from provocations and adhere to their obligations, enter direct negotiations and come forward with concrete and negotiable proposals. The United Nations stands ready to play its full role in supporting such efforts in good faith, based on the international legal basis affirmed by the Quartet, including the resolutions of the Council and existing agreements between the parties.

VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on held a special meeting 29 November 2011 at headquarters in New York in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Other duty stations also commemorated the day, including Geneva, Vienna and Beirut in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977. Speakers at the special meeting included the Chair of the Committee, the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, as well as other representatives of intergovernmental and civil society organizations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent a message to the meeting, the text of which is reproduced below (SG/SM/13970, OBV/1056.PAL/2147).

Sixty-four years ago on this day, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181, proposing the partition of the mandate territory into two States. The establishment of a Palestinian State, living in peace next to a secure Israel, is long overdue.

The need to resolve this conflict has taken on greater urgency with the historic transformations taking place across the region. I call on the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to show courage and determination to seek an agreement for a two-State solution that can open up a brighter future for Palestinian and Israeli children. Such a solution must end the occupation that began in 1967, and meet legitimate security concerns. Jerusalem must emerge from negotiations as the capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all. And a just and agreed solution must be found for millions of Palestinian refugees scattered around the region.

While there are many challenges to this goal, let me stress an important, indeed historic, achievement of the Palestinian Authority during the past year. The Palestinian Authority is now institutionally ready to assume the responsibilities of statehood, if a Palestinian state were created.

This was affirmed by a wide range of members of the international community at the meeting of the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee in September. I commend President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad on this remarkable success. These efforts should continue and be supported.

In this regard, the current suspension by Israel of customs and tax transfers owed to the Palestinian Authority risks undermining these gains. These revenues must be transferred without delay.

Above all else, a political horizon is vital. I am deeply concerned that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are not taking place, while trust between the parties continues to fade. A glimpse of hope comes from their engagement with the Middle East Quartet. I call on both sides to develop serious proposals on borders and security, and to discuss them directly with each other, with active Quartet support, in the context of a shared commitment to reach an agreement by the end of 2012.

The parties have a particular responsibility to cease provocations and create a conducive environment for meaningful negotiations. Israel's recently

intensified settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is a major obstacle. Settlement activity is contrary to international law and the road map, and must cease. Unilateral actions on the ground will not be accepted by the international community. For its part, the Palestinian Authority should also find ways to help de-escalate the situation and improve the prevailing divisive climate, and to be ready to engage directly in the search for a negotiated solution.

I also urge the Palestinians to overcome their divisions, based on the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the positions of the Quartet and the Arab Peace Initiative. I take note of President Abbas's continuous efforts towards a transitional government that will prepare for presidential and legislative elections in May. Palestinian unity that supports a negotiated two-State solution is essential for the creation of a Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank.

The United Nations continues to be strongly committed to the population in Gaza, and to implementing all aspects of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). I appreciate efforts undertaken by Israel to ease the closure, and continue to call for removing the numerous remaining measures that severely restrict the movement of people and goods and limit the ability of the United Nations to support Gaza's economic recovery and reconstruction.

I also take this opportunity to remind those in Gaza who fire rockets at Israel or continue to smuggle weapons that these actions are both unacceptable and completely contrary to Palestinian interests.

I call for an end to rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and for Israel to exercise maximum restraint. Both parties should fully observe calm and respect international humanitarian law.

I welcome the recent prisoner exchange that saw the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and an Israeli soldier. This significant humanitarian breakthrough should be followed by further steps to consolidate calm and end the closure of Gaza.

Amid these many challenges to the realization of their legitimate aspirations for statehood, the Palestinian leadership submitted an application for membership in the United Nations. This is a matter for the Member States to decide. Whatever view of this matter is taken, we should not lose sight of the ultimate goal of reaching a negotiated peace agreement on all final status issues, including borders, security, Jerusalem and refugees.

Let us, on this International Day, reaffirm our commitment to translating solidarity into positive action. The international community must help steer the situation towards a historic peace agreement. Failing to overcome mistrust will only condemn further generations of Palestinians and Israelis to conflict and suffering. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), previous agreements, the Madrid framework, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative is critical to avoid this fate. For my part, I pledge to continue pursuing my efforts with all the means available to me.

VII. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS FOUR RESOLUTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

On 30 November 2011, the General Assembly resumed its discussion of agenda item 37 on the Question of Palestine and adopted four resolutions that had been introduced the previous day by the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/Res/66/14 to 17). The text of the resolutions are reproduced below, with an indication of the vote.

66/14

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

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, 3375 (XXX) and 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, 31/20 of 24 November 1976 and all its subsequent relevant resolutions, including those adopted at its emergency special sessions and its resolution 65/13 of 30 November 2010,

Recalling also its resolution 58/292 of 6 May 2004,

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,¹

Recalling the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, as well as the existing agreements between the two sides and the need for full compliance with those agreements,

Affirming its support for the Middle East peace process on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the

terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth session² and the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003,³

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,⁴ and recalling also its resolutions ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 and ES-10/17 of 15 December 2006,

Taking note of the application of Palestine for admission to membership in the United Nations, submitted on 23 September 2011,⁵

Reaffirming that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy,

1. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Committee on the Exercise of the

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/66/35).*

² A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

³ S/2003/529, annex.

⁴ See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1; see also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion*, I.C.J. Reports 2004, p. 136.

⁵ A/66/371-S/2011/592, annex I.

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly, and takes note of its annual report,¹ including the conclusions and valuable recommendations contained in chapter VII thereof;

2. *Requests* the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, to support the Middle East peace process for the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and the just resolution of all final status issues and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people, and, in this regard, authorizes the Committee to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it may consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and thereafter;

3. *Also requests* the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly, the Security Council or the Secretary-General, as appropriate;

4. *Further requests* the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations and to continue to involve additional civil society organizations and parliamentarians in its work in order to mobilize international solidarity and support for the Palestinian people, particularly during this critical period of political instability, humanitarian hardship and financial crisis, with the overall aim of promoting the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of the

relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative² and the Quartet road map;³

5. *Requests* the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, established under General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it, at its request, the relevant information and documentation which they have at their disposal;

6. *Invites* all Governments and organizations to extend their cooperation to the Committee in the performance of its tasks;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to circulate the report of the Committee to all the competent bodies of the United Nations, and urges them to take the necessary action, as appropriate;

8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Committee with all the necessary facilities for the performance of its tasks.

(The resolution was adopted by 115 to 8, with 53 abstentions)

66/15

Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,⁶

⁶ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/66/35).*

Taking note, in particular, of the action taken by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in accordance with their mandates,

Recalling its resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977 and all its subsequent relevant resolutions, including its resolution 65/14 of 30 November 2010,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the action taken by the Secretary-General in compliance with its resolution 65/14;

2. *Considers* that, by providing substantive support to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in the implementation of its mandate, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat continues to make a most useful and constructive contribution to raising international awareness of the question of Palestine and of the urgency of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects on the basis of international law and United Nations resolutions and the efforts being exerted in this regard, and to generating international support for the rights of the Palestinian people;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continues to carry out its programme of work as detailed in relevant earlier resolutions, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance;

4. *Requests* the Division, in particular, to continue to monitor developments relevant to the question of Palestine, organize international meetings and conferences in various regions with the

participation of all sectors of the international community, liaise and cooperate with civil society and parliamentarians, develop and expand the “Question of Palestine” website and the documents collection of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, prepare and widely disseminate publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and develop and enhance the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority in contribution to Palestinian capacity-building efforts;

5. *Also requests* the Division, as part of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, to continue to organize, under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, and encourages Member States to continue to give the widest support and publicity to the observance of the Day of Solidarity;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure the continued cooperation with the Division of the United Nations system entities with programme components addressing various aspects of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

7. *Invites* all Governments and organizations to extend their cooperation to the Division in the performance of its tasks.

(The resolution was adopted by 114 in to 9, with 54 abstentions)

66/16

Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,⁷

Taking note, in particular, of the information contained in chapter VI of that report,

Recalling its resolution 65/15 of 30 November 2010,

Convinced that the worldwide dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information and the role of civil society organizations and institutions remain of vital importance in heightening awareness of and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and independence, and for the efforts to achieve a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine,

Recalling the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, as well as the existing agreements between the two sides,

Affirming its support for the Middle East peace process on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States

at its fourteenth session,⁸ and the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003,⁹

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,¹⁰

Reaffirming that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the action taken by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat in compliance with resolution 65/15;

2. *Considers* that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department is very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East and that the programme is contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process and should receive the necessary support for the fulfilment of its tasks;

3. *Requests* the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting

⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/66/35).*

⁸ A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

⁹ S/2003/529, annex.

¹⁰ See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1; see also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136.

the question of Palestine, its special information programme for 2011-2012, in particular:

(a) To disseminate information on all the activities of the United Nations system relating to the question of Palestine and the peace process, including reports on the work carried out by the relevant United Nations organizations, as well as on the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy vis-à-vis the peace process;

(b) To continue to issue, update and modernize publications and audio-visual materials on the various aspects of the question of Palestine in all fields, including materials concerning the relevant recent developments in that regard, in particular the efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine;

(c) To expand its collection of audio-visual material on the question of Palestine, to continue the production and preservation of such material and to update, on a periodic basis, the public exhibit on the question of Palestine displayed in the General Assembly building as well as at United Nations headquarters in Geneva and Vienna;

(d) To organize and promote fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel;

(e) To organize international, regional and national seminars or encounters for journalists aimed in particular at sensitizing public opinion to the question of Palestine and the peace process and at enhancing dialogue and understanding between Palestinians and Israelis for the promotion of a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including by fostering and encouraging the contribution

of the media in support of peace between the two sides;

(f) To continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development, in particular to strengthen the annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists;

4. *Encourages* the Department to formulate ways for the media and representatives of civil society to engage in open and positive discussions to explore means for encouraging people-to-people dialogue and promoting peace and mutual understanding in the region.

(The resolution was adopted by 168 to 8, with 3 abstentions)

66/17

Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine

The General Assembly,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including those adopted at its tenth emergency special session,

Recalling also its resolution 58/292 of 6 May 2004,

Recalling further relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002, 1515 (2003) of 19 November 2003, 1544 (2004) of 19 May 2004 and 1850 (2008) of 16 December 2008,

Recalling the affirmation by the Security Council of the vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders,

Noting with concern that it has been more than sixty years since the adoption of its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and forty-four years since the occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in 1967,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to the request made in its resolution 65/16 of 30 November 2010,¹¹

Reaffirming the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with regard to the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with international law and relevant resolutions,

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,¹² and recalling also its resolutions ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 and ES-10/17 of 15 December 2006,

Convinced that achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is imperative for the attainment of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East,

Stressing that the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples is among the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war,

Recalling its resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970,

Reaffirming the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem,

Stressing the extremely detrimental impact of Israeli settlement policies, decisions and activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, on efforts to resume and advance the peace process and to achieve peace in the Middle East,

Reaffirming the illegality of Israeli actions aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem, including settlement construction and expansion, home demolitions, evictions of Palestinian residents, excavations in and around religious and historic sites, and all other unilateral measures aimed at altering the character, status and demographic composition of the city and of the Territory as a whole,

Reaffirming also that the construction by Israel, the occupying Power, of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated regime are contrary to international law,

Expressing deep concern about the continuing Israeli policy of closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including medical and humanitarian, via the imposition of prolonged closures and severe economic and movement restrictions that in effect amount to a blockade, as well as of checkpoints and a permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

¹¹ A/66/367-S/2011/585.

¹² See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1; see also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136.

Jerusalem, and the consequent negative impact on the contiguity of the Territory and the serious socio-economic and humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, which is critical in the Gaza Strip, and on the efforts aimed at rehabilitating and developing the damaged Palestinian economy, while taking note of recent developments regarding the situation of access to the Gaza Strip,

Recalling the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people,¹³ and the need for full compliance with the agreements concluded between the two sides,

Recalling also the endorsement by the Security Council, in resolution 1515 (2003), of the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹⁴ and the call in Council resolution 1850 (2008) for the parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map and to refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations, and recalling further in this regard the relevant Quartet statements, including that of 23 September 2011,¹⁵

Noting the Israeli withdrawal in 2005 from the Gaza Strip and parts of the northern West Bank and the dismantlement of the settlements therein as a step towards the implementation of the road map, and stressing in this regard the road-map obligation upon Israel to freeze settlement activity, including so-called “natural growth”, and to dismantle all settlement outposts erected since March 2001,

Recalling the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth session, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 March 2002,¹⁶

Expressing support for the agreed principles for bilateral negotiations, as affirmed by the parties in their Joint Understanding reached at the international conference held at Annapolis, United States of America, on 27 November 2007,¹⁷ aimed at concluding a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, for the achievement of a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and ultimately of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East,

Reiterating support for the convening of an international conference in Moscow, as envisioned by the Security Council in resolution 1850 (2008) and the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011, for the advancement and acceleration of a resumed peace process,

Noting the important contribution to the peace process of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, including within the framework of the activities of the Quartet,

Noting also the continuing efforts of the Quartet’s Special Representative towards the resumption of the peace process, in particular the efforts to strengthen Palestinian institutions, promote Palestinian economic development and mobilize donor support,

¹³ See A/48/486-S/26560, annex.

¹⁴ S/2003/529, annex.

¹⁵ Available from www.unsco.org.

¹⁶ A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

¹⁷ Available from <http://unispal.un.org>.

Welcoming the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians, under the chairmanship of Norway, at United Nations Headquarters on 18 September 2011, at which, based on relevant reports by the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the donor countries reconfirmed the assessment that the institutions of the Palestinian Authority are above the threshold of a functioning State in the key sectors studied and reaffirmed the necessity of continued donor support for the Palestinian Authority,

Recognizing the efforts being undertaken by the Palestinian Authority, with international support, to rebuild, reform and strengthen its damaged institutions, emphasizing the need to preserve and further develop Palestinian institutions and infrastructure and commending, in this regard, the implementation of the Palestinian Authority's August 2009 plan for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a twenty-four-month period, and the significant achievements made, as confirmed by international institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, in their reports to the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 13 April 2011,

Welcoming the continued efforts and tangible progress made in the security sector by the Palestinian Authority, calling upon the parties to continue cooperation that benefits both Palestinians and Israelis, in particular by promoting security and building confidence, and expressing the hope that such progress will be extended to all major population centres,

Reiterating its concern over the negative developments that have continued to occur in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory, including East Jerusalem, including the large number of deaths and injuries, mostly among Palestinian civilians, the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, acts of violence, vandalism and brutality committed against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, the widespread destruction of public and private Palestinian property and infrastructure, the internal displacement of civilians and the serious deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people,

Expressing grave concern, in particular, over the crisis in the Gaza Strip as a result of the continuing prolonged Israeli closures and severe economic and movement restrictions that in effect amount to a blockade and the military operations in the Gaza Strip between December 2008 and January 2009, which caused extensive loss of life and injury, particularly among Palestinian civilians, including children and women, widespread damage and destruction to Palestinian homes, properties, vital infrastructure, public institutions, including hospitals and schools, and United Nations facilities, and internal displacement of civilians,

Stressing the need for the full implementation by all parties of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January 2009 and General Assembly resolution ES-10/18 of 16 January 2009,

Expressing concern over continuing military actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including raids and arrest campaigns, and over the continued imposition of hundreds of checkpoints and obstacles to movement in and around Palestinian population centres by the Israeli occupying forces, and emphasizing in this regard the need for the implementation by both sides of the Sharm el-Sheikh understandings,

Emphasizing the importance of the safety, protection and well-being of all civilians in the whole Middle East region, and condemning all acts of violence and terror against civilians on both sides,

Expressing the hope for speedy progress towards Palestinian reconciliation for the restoration of Palestinian unity, under the leadership of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and consistent with Palestine Liberation Organization commitments, and of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to June 2007, and calling for the continuation of the serious efforts being exerted by Egypt, the League of Arab States and other concerned parties towards the achievement of this aim,

Stressing the urgent need for sustained and active international involvement, including by the Quartet, to support both parties in resuming, advancing and accelerating the peace process negotiations for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative,

Noting the Quartet's determination in the recent period to support the parties throughout the negotiations, which can be completed and resolve all final status issues within one year, and in the implementation of an agreement between the two sides that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the independence of a democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours,

Taking note of the application of Palestine for admission to membership in

the United Nations, submitted on 23 September 2011,¹⁸

Acknowledging the efforts being undertaken by civil society to promote a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine,

Recalling the findings by the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion, including on the urgent necessity for the United Nations as a whole to redouble its efforts to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which continues to pose a threat to international peace and security, to a speedy conclusion, thereby establishing a just and lasting peace in the region,¹⁹

Affirming once again the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders,

1. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and of intensifying all efforts towards that end, and stresses in this regard the urgency of salvaging the prospects for realizing the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders;

2. *Also reaffirms* its full support for the Middle East peace process, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States

¹⁸ A/66/371-S/2011/592, annex I.

¹⁹ See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1, advisory opinion, para. 161; see also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136.

at its fourteenth session,¹⁵ and the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,¹⁴ and for the existing agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, stresses the necessity for the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and welcomes in this regard the ongoing efforts of the Quartet and of the League of Arab States;

3. *Encourages* continued serious regional and international efforts to follow up and promote the Arab Peace Initiative, including by the Ministerial Committee formed at the Riyadh summit in March 2007;

4. *Urges* the parties to undertake, with the support of the Quartet and the international community, immediate and concrete steps in follow-up to the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Understanding reached at the international conference held in Annapolis,¹⁷ including through the resumption of active and serious bilateral negotiations;

5. *Encourages*, in this regard, the convening of an international conference in Moscow, as envisioned by the Security Council in resolution 1850 (2008), for the advancement and acceleration of a resumed peace process;

6. *Calls upon* both parties to act on the basis of international law and their previous agreements and obligations, in particular adherence to the road map, irrespective of reciprocity, in order to create the conditions necessary for the resumption and accelerated advancement of negotiations in the near term;

7. *Calls upon* the parties themselves, with the support of the Quartet and other interested parties, to exert all efforts necessary to halt the deterioration of the

situation and to reverse all unilateral and unlawful measures taken on the ground since 28 September 2000;

8. *Calls upon* the parties to observe calm and restraint and to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric, especially in areas of religious and cultural sensitivity;

9. *Underscores* the need for the parties to take confidence-building measures aimed at improving the situation on the ground, promoting stability and fostering the peace process, including the need for the further release of prisoners following the exchange of prisoners in October 2011;

10. *Stresses* the need for the removal of checkpoints and other obstructions to the movement of persons and goods throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the need for respect and preservation of the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

11. *Also stresses* the need for an immediate and complete cessation of all acts of violence, including military attacks, destruction and acts of terror;

12. *Reiterates its demand* for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009);

13. *Reiterates* the need for the full implementation by both parties of the Agreement on Movement and Access and of the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing, of 15 November 2005, and the need, specifically, to allow for the sustained opening of all crossings into and out of the Gaza Strip for humanitarian supplies, movement and access, as well as for commercial flows and all necessary construction materials, which are essential

for alleviating the humanitarian crisis, improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people and promoting the recovery of the Palestinian economy;

14. *Stresses*, in this regard, the urgent necessity for the advancement of reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, including through the completion of numerous suspended projects managed by the United Nations and the accelerated implementation of United Nations-led civilian reconstruction activities;

15. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to comply strictly with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, and to cease all of its measures that are contrary to international law and unilateral actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that are aimed at altering the character, status and demographic composition of the Territory, including via the confiscation and de facto annexation of land, and thus at prejudging the final outcome of peace negotiations;

16. *Reiterates its demand* for the complete cessation of all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, and calls for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions;

17. *Stresses*, in this regard, the need for Israel forthwith to abide by its road-map obligation to freeze all settlement activity, including so-called “natural growth”, and to dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001;

18. *Calls for* the cessation of all provocations, including by Israeli settlers, in East Jerusalem, including in and around religious sites;

19. *Demands*, accordingly, that Israel, the occupying Power, comply with its legal obligations under international law, as mentioned in the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice¹² and as demanded in General Assembly resolutions ES-10/13 of 21 October 2003 and ES-10/15, and, inter alia, that it immediately cease its construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and calls upon all States Members of the United Nations to comply with their legal obligations, as mentioned in the advisory opinion;

20. *Reaffirms its commitment*, in accordance with international law, to the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders;

21. *Stresses* the need for:

(a) The withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem;

(b) The realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent State;

22. *Also stresses* the need for a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with its resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948;

23. *Calls upon* the parties to resume and accelerate direct peace negotiations towards the conclusion of a final peaceful settlement on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, especially of the Security Council, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative;

24. *Urges* Member States to expedite the provision of economic, humanitarian and technical assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority during this critical period in order to help to alleviate the serious humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which is critical in the Gaza Strip, to rehabilitate the Palestinian economy and infrastructure and to support the development and strengthening of Palestinian institutions and Palestinian State-building efforts in preparation for independence;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, towards the attainment of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the promotion of peace in the region and to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session a report on these efforts and on developments on this matter.

(The resolution was adopted by 167 to 7, with 4 abstentions)

VIII. GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS TWO RESOLUTIONS ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

On 30 November 2011, the General Assembly resumed its discussion of agenda item 36 on the situation in the Middle East and adopted two resolutions, 66/18 on Jerusalem and 66/19 on the Syrian Golan. The text of the resolution is reproduced below on Jerusalem with an indication of the vote.

66/18 Jerusalem

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, in particular its provisions regarding the City of Jerusalem,

Recalling also its resolution 36/120 E of 10 December 1981 and all its subsequent relevant resolutions, including resolution 56/31 of 3 December 2001, in which it, inter alia, determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, in particular the so-called “Basic Law” on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, were null and void and must be rescinded forthwith,

Recalling further the Security Council resolutions relevant to Jerusalem, including resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980, in which the Council, inter alia, decided not to recognize the “Basic Law” on Jerusalem,

Recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,¹² and recalling its resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

Expressing its grave concern about any action taken by any body, governmental or non-governmental, in violation of the above-mentioned resolutions,

Expressing its grave concern also, in particular, about the continuation by Israel, the occupying Power, of illegal settlement activities, including the so-called E-1 plan,

its construction of the wall in and around East Jerusalem, its restrictions on access to and residence in East Jerusalem and the further isolation of the city from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which are having a detrimental effect on the lives of Palestinians and could prejudice a final status agreement on Jerusalem,

Expressing its grave concern further about the continuing Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes, the revocation of residency rights and the eviction and displacement of numerous Palestinian families from East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, as well as other acts of provocation and incitement, including by Israeli settlers, in the city,

Expressing its concern about the Israeli excavations undertaken in the Old City of Jerusalem, including in and around religious sites,

Reaffirming that the international community, through the United Nations, has a legitimate interest in the question of the City of Jerusalem and in the protection of the unique spiritual, religious and cultural dimensions of the city, as foreseen in relevant United Nations resolutions on this matter,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Middle East,²⁰

1. *Reiterates* its determination that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever, and calls upon Israel to immediately cease all such illegal and unilateral measures;

2. *Stresses* that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by the people of all religions and nationalities;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution.

(164 in favour to 7 against, with 5 abstentions)

²⁰ A/66/338