



DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

October 2013
Volume XXXVI, Bulletin No. 10

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

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. World Bank issues study on Area C and the future of the Palestinian economy	1
II. Secretary-General issues report on Israeli practices affecting human rights of the Palestinian people	3
III. Palestinian Rights Committee issues report	6
IV. Secretary-General addresses UN International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East held in Istanbul	10
V. Secretary-General issues report on Israeli settlements	11

Contents (continued)

	<i>Page</i>
VI. Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs briefs Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	12
VII. Secretary-General deplores Israel's settlement plans	16

*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. WORLD BANK ISSUES STUDY ON AREA C AND THE FUTURE OF THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY

The World Bank on 2 October 2013 issued a report entitled “West Bank and Gaza: Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy”. This report examines the economic benefits of lifting the restrictions and other administrative obstacles to Palestinian investment and economic activity in Area C. The executive summary of the report is reproduced below:

Executive Summary

i. *Restrictions on economic activity in Area C of the West Bank have been particularly detrimental to the Palestinian economy.* Area C constitutes about 61 per cent of the West Bank territory and was defined under the Oslo Peace Accords as the area that would be gradually transferred to the Palestinian Authority within a period of 5 years, except for the parts to be agreed upon within the final settlement agreement.¹ The gradual transfer has not yet taken place and, in the meantime, access to this area for most kinds of economic activity has been severely limited. Yet, the potential contribution of Area C to the Palestinian economy is large. Area C is richly endowed with natural resources and it is contiguous, whereas Areas A and B are smaller territorial islands. The manner in which Area C is currently administered virtually precludes Palestinian businesses from investing there.

ii. *Mobilizing the Area C potential would help a faltering Palestinian economy.* The Palestinian economy has experienced strong growth in recent years, fuelled by large inflows of donor budget support, some easing of the Israeli movement restrictions that intensified during the second intifada, and a PA reform program. By 2012, however, foreign budget support had declined by more than half, and GDP growth has fallen from 9 per cent in 2008-11 to 5.9 per cent by 2012 and to 1.9 per cent in the

first half of 2013 (with negative growth of — 0.1 per cent in the West Bank).

iii. *This slowdown has exposed the distorted nature of the economy and its artificial reliance on donor-financed consumption.* For a small open economy, prosperity requires a strong tradable sector with the ability to compete in the global marketplace. The faltering nature of the peace process and the persistence of administrative restrictions as well as others on trade, movement and access have had a dampening effect on private investment and private sector activity. Private investment has averaged a mere 15 per cent of GDP over the past seven years, compared with rates of over 25 per cent in vigorous middle income countries. The manufacturing sector, usually a key driver of export-led growth, has stagnated since 1994, its share in GDP falling from 19 per cent to 10 per cent by 2011. Nor has manufacturing been replaced by high value-added service exports like Information Technology (IT) or tourism, as might have been expected. Much of the meager investment has been channeled into internal trade and real estate development, neither of which generates significant employment. Consequently, unemployment rates have remained very high in the Palestinian territories and are currently about 22 per cent — with almost a quarter of the workforce employed by the Palestinian Authority, an unhealthy proportion that reflects the lack of dynamism in the private sector. While the unsettled political environment and internal Palestinian political divisions have contributed to

¹The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (“Oslo 2”_ 9/28/95).

investor aversion to the Palestinian territories, Israeli restrictions on trade, movement and access have been seen as the dominant deterrent.

iv. Area C is key to future Palestinian economic development. The decisive negative economic impact of Israeli restrictions has been analyzed in many reports produced by the World Bank and other development agencies over the past decade, and Israel's rationale for them — that they are necessary to protect Israeli citizens — is also well-known. Within this setting, Area C is particularly important because it is either off limits for Palestinian economic activity, or only accessible with considerable difficulty and often at prohibitive cost. Since Area C is where the majority of the West Bank's natural resources lie, the impact of these restrictions on the Palestinian economy has been considerable. Thus, the key to Palestinian prosperity continues to lie in the removal of these restrictions with due regard for Israel's security. As this report shows, rolling back the restrictions would bring substantial benefits to the Palestinian economy and could usher in a new period of increasing Palestinian GDP and substantially improved prospects for sustained growth.

v. This report examines the economic benefits of lifting the restrictions on movement and access as well as other administrative obstacles to Palestinian investment and economic activity in Area C.

It focuses on the economic potential of Area C and does not prejudge the status of any territory which may be subject to negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. We examine potential direct, sector-specific benefits, but also indirect benefits related to improvements in physical and institutional infrastructure, as well as spillover effects to other sectors of the Palestinian economy. The sectors we examine are agriculture, Dead Sea minerals exploitation, stone mining and quarrying, construction, tourism, telecommunications and cosmetics. To do so, we have assumed that the various physical, legal, regulatory and bureaucratic constraints that currently prevent investors from obtaining construction permits, and accessing land and water resources are lifted, as envisaged under the Interim Agreement. We then estimate potential production and value added, using deliberately conservative assumptions — and avoid quantification where data are inadequate (as with cosmetics, for example, or for tourism other than that of Dead Sea resorts). It is understood that realizing the full potential of such investments requires other changes as well — first, the rolling back of the movement and access restrictions in force outside Area C, which prevent the easy export of Palestinian products and inhibit tourists and investors from accessing Area C; and second, further reforms by the Palestinian Authority to better enable potential investors to register businesses, enforce contracts, and acquire finance.

II. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES REPORT ON ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued the annual report on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem (A/68/502). Excerpts of the report are reproduced below:

...

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/121. In the resolution, the Assembly, among other things, reiterated the need for respect for the territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and for guarantees of the freedom of movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, including movement into and from East Jerusalem, into and from the Gaza Strip, between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to and from the outside world. It demanded that Israel cease all practices and actions that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the killing and injury of civilians. The Assembly also emphasized the need to preserve and develop Palestinian institutions and infrastructure for the provision of vital public services to the Palestinian civilian population and the promotion of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

2. The report covers the period from 16 June 2012 to 30 June 2013, with the additional inclusion of relevant background information. The information contained in the report is based primarily on monitoring and other information-gathering activities carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other United Nations entities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It also contains information

obtained from Israeli, Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights defenders and media sources. The report does not provide a comprehensive account of all human rights concerns in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and should be read in conjunction with other recent reports of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner (A/67/372, A/67/375, A/HRC/22/35 and Add.1 and A/HRC/24/30).

3. Two main themes are covered in the report. First, the report examines Israeli policies and practices that are fragmenting the territory of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and physically separating its population, thereby undermining a number of human rights, including the right to freedom of movement and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people. Second, it addresses actions taken by the Israeli security forces focusing on the killing and injuring of civilians in the context of hostilities and during law enforcement operations. The extent to which alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are investigated and violators held accountable, by both the Government of Israel and Palestinian authorities, is given significant attention. While the report notes some positive steps taken by the Government of Israel and Palestinian authorities regarding accountability, it points to concerns in a number of areas.

4. The applicable legal framework for the present report is international humanitarian law and international human

rights law, as set out in previous reports submitted to the General Assembly and reports of the High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted to the Human Rights Council.¹

...

I. Recommendations

A. To the Government of Israel

48. The Government of Israel must take all necessary measures to ensure the accountability of its security forces. It should conduct investigations into all credible allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Investigations must be independent, transparent, impartial, thorough, prompt, and effective. Redress for victims must be ensured.

49. The Government of Israel should lift the blockade of Gaza and allow the free movement of civilians from and into Gaza according to the Oslo Accords, the Agreement on Movement and Access, and Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Any measures that restrict the freedom of movement and transfer of goods must be consistent with international law.

50. Measures to enforce the access to restricted areas must comply with international law. In situations other than hostilities, these measures must be consistent with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. In the context of hostilities, any enforcement of the access-restricted areas must comply with international humanitarian law.

¹A detailed analysis of the applicable legal framework is set out in A/HRC/12/37, paras. 5-9. This analysis remains valid. See also A/67/375, paras. 4 and 5.

51. The Government of Israel should take immediate steps to respect and ensure respect for the right to freedom of movement for Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A first step should be to fully comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of 9 July 2004.

B. To the de facto authorities and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza

52. Accountability must be ensured for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, in particular the killing of civilians, the indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israel and summary executions, committed by the de facto authorities and armed groups in Gaza. Investigations must be independent, transparent, impartial, thorough, prompt, and effective. Redress for victims must be ensured.

C. To the Government of the State of Palestine²

53. The Government of the State of Palestine must take all necessary measures to ensure accountability of its security forces. It should conduct investigations into all credible allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Investigations must be independent, transparent, impartial,

²In a letter dated 12 December 2012 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations informed that, in line with General Assembly resolution 67/19, the designation "State of Palestine" should be used in all official documents of the United Nations. On 3 January 2013, Mahmoud Abbas, President, State of Palestine issued a decree instructing that "Official documents, seals, signs and letterheads of the Palestinian National Authority official and national institutions, shall be amended, by replacing the name 'Palestinian National Authority' whenever it appears by the name 'State of Palestine', and by adopting the emblem of the State of Palestine. The relevant authorities shall be in charge of monitoring the implementation of this Decree, taking into account the requirements of use".

thorough, prompt, and effective. Redress for victims must be ensured.

54. The Government of the State of Palestine should continue to take all necessary steps to establish effective accountability mechanisms, codes of conduct, standard operating procedures, and other guidance for security forces, in accordance with international human rights

law and principles, and ensure their prompt and thorough implementation and operation.

55. When the Government of the State of Palestine establishes investigatory committees, their operation should be governed by clear and well-defined rules of procedure, in compliance with applicable international human rights law and principles, and with clear deadlines for the completion of their mandates.

III. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ISSUES REPORT

On 7 October 2013, the Committee of the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People issued its annual report (A/68/35). The report's conclusions and recommendations are reproduced below:

Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

77. The Committee remains firmly convinced that a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects and an end to the Israeli occupation remain central to peace and stability throughout the volatile Middle East region and merit the close attention of the international community. To that end, the Committee concentrated its efforts on promoting international awareness of the issue, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to an independent and sovereign Palestinian State based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Committee urged the international community to step up its engagement for the resumption of final status negotiations, within a clear framework based on internationally recognized parameters; promoted international action against obstacles in their path, such as the illegal Israeli settlement enterprise; encouraged solidarity with the Palestinians and their State; and engaged with diverse constituencies in support of peace. In its

programme of work, the Committee analysed the ramifications of the new reality of a State under occupation. It actively sought to incorporate lessons learned from the history of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles of other countries, in particular in Africa. It continued to mobilize international support for the Palestinian State-building programme, while highlighting the massive economic costs of the Israeli occupation. It urged increased donor support for the agencies of the United Nations system, in particular UNRWA, providing vital humanitarian support for the Palestinian people.

78. The Committee welcomed the admission of Palestine as a non-member observer State by the General Assembly, while calling upon all Member States to extend full diplomatic recognition to it. The Committee is of the view that the vote in the General Assembly constituted an important step towards the realization of the two-State solution, gave a new urgency to the resumption of the peace process, and vested the State of Palestine with important additional rights to join international legal

frameworks and to contribute to the work of the United Nations system as a whole. The Committee stands ready to support Palestinian initiatives in this regard at the appropriate time. The Security Council should revisit the issue of the full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations in the light of the General Assembly vote.

79. The Committee condemned the illegal retaliatory measures undertaken by Israel following the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 67/19, including the withholding of Palestinian revenues and the acceleration of the settlement campaign, which raised tensions on the ground and jeopardized Palestinian institutional and socioeconomic development. The Committee calls upon the donors to institute a financial safety net to prevent future damage to Palestinian institutions, the development of which donors have generously supported over the years. The Committee condemned other illegal measures by Israel, the occupying Power, such as the construction of the separation wall, the use of excessive force against Palestinian protesters, arrest raids, prisoner abuse, the continuation of the Gaza blockade and hundreds of checkpoints throughout the West Bank and measures that stymie development and cause the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, particularly from East Jerusalem and Area C. The Committee raised international awareness of the abusive practices experienced by the thousands of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, including by prisoners undertaking hunger strikes, minors and those held without trial, and called for their prompt release and reintegration into Palestinian society.

80. The Committee remained deeply troubled by repeated bouts of violence. It condemned all attacks against civilians, in

particular the military operation launched by Israel against Gaza in November 2012, the rocket fire from Gaza against Israeli civilian targets, settler violence, and the killings of unarmed protesters by Israeli forces. It calls upon the parties to adhere to the terms of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. It further calls upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to act urgently to uphold international humanitarian law and guarantee the protection of civilians.

81. The Committee welcomes the vigorous international diplomacy by the United States, the Arab League, the Secretary-General and many world leaders, which laid the basis for the resumption of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Committee salutes the demonstrated commitment of the Palestinian leadership to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which should be reciprocated by the Israeli side. The Committee is looking forward to serious negotiations on the basis of pre-1967 borders which resolve all outstanding issues within the envisaged time frame, leading to the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the independence of a truly sovereign, contiguous, viable and democratic State of Palestine. Sustained engagement and support by the international community, including a revitalized Quartet, is vital to ensure that the parties negotiate in good faith, live up to their commitments, and refrain from steps that jeopardize negotiations. Stepped-up international assistance and a tangible rollback of the measures of occupation are required to build popular support for negotiations. The current diplomatic initiative may represent the final window of opportunity to achieve a negotiated two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace

Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. The Committee is concerned in this regard by continued Israeli settlement announcements that threaten to derail negotiations. The Committee also stresses the importance of Palestinian unity under the legitimate leadership of President Abbas to secure a comprehensive peace.

82. The Committee welcomed the findings and recommendations of the international fact-finding mission on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which highlighted the responsibility of States and private entities not to contribute to grave Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights, in particular in respect of settlements. It further welcomes in this regard the recently adopted European Union guidelines that prohibit funding by European Union institutions for Israeli entities connected with the settlements, as an overdue first step towards fulfilling obligations under international law. This measure should be followed up by further international action against settlements.

83. The Committee has consistently supported the Palestinian State-building and reform agenda. It is concerned that the accomplishments are now endangered owing to the chronic financial crisis and calls upon donors to meet their prior commitments and to provide additional aid to avert further deterioration. The Committee remains convinced, however, that sustainable economic development cannot take root under the existing regime of Israeli occupation.

84. The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights will continue through their mandated activities to generate heightened international awareness of the question of Palestine, as well as international support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the peaceful

settlement of the question of Palestine. In this connection, the Committee emphasizes the useful and constructive contribution of the Division in support of its mandate. It notes with satisfaction: (a) the sustained level of dialogue, engagement and support on the part of the international community for the programme's objectives, as evidenced by the number of adopted resolutions, international meetings and conferences, commemorations of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and increased membership of the Committee; (b) the continued involvement of civil society organizations in support of the efforts of the Committee and the United Nations towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the number of civil society conferences, public forums, meetings and consultations between the Committee and civil society organizations; and (c) an increase in international awareness of the United Nations policies and activities on the question of Palestine, as evidenced by the increased number of visits to the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and other information materials on the "Question of Palestine" website. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, carried out annually by the Division, has proved its usefulness, as it directly contributes to Palestinian capacity-building efforts. The Committee strongly recommends that this important mandated activity be continued and, where possible, further enhanced.

85. The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2014, to be implemented by the Division, on widening international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

The programme will also focus on the creation of a favourable atmosphere for the success of the resumed permanent status negotiations. The Committee intends to mobilize increased international scrutiny of the developments on the ground, in particular settlement activities, and will emphasize responsibility and promote action by the international community to put an end to all illegal Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee will examine the legal ramifications of the new international status of the State of Palestine, and will also continue to call attention to the plight of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails and urge a resolution of their plight.

86. The Committee will analyse lessons learned and the feedback received from participants in its events and adjust their format and substance, as appropriate. It will strive to involve prominent international personalities and experts and the representatives of vulnerable populations, such as women and refugees, in its events, while giving due regard to gender balance.

87. The Committee will continue to enrich the format of its regular meetings. It will invite internationally renowned personalities to brief the Committee and the wider United Nations membership. The Committee also considers that the round-table meetings have proved particularly useful in generating practical proposals for action in the United Nations and beyond and will continue to utilize this format.

88. The Committee will continue to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to support and enhance the viability of the State of Palestine. It will reach out to and engage Governments, parliamentarians and civil society to mobilize support for a just

solution to all permanent status issues, including the question of refugees, based on principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 194 (III). The Committee wishes to contribute to efforts towards ending incitement on both sides, as well as to promote peace education. It will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth and their organizations. The Committee also wishes to promote Palestinian reconciliation.

89. The Committee highly values civil society initiatives in support of the Palestinian people. A comprehensive peace will take root only if the relevant civil societies strongly demand it of their political leaderships. Special efforts are needed to revitalize the peace camp in Israel. The Committee lauds the courageous advocacy actions of countless activists, including eminent personalities and parliamentarians, who participate in demonstrations against the wall, try to break the siege of Gaza and keep their home constituencies informed about the harsh realities of life under occupation. The Committee encourages civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliamentarians and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine. The Committee believes that the recommendations it adopted during the reporting period and its reactivated Working Group will help in building stronger partnerships with civil society. The Committee appreciates the support it receives from the Secretariat in this regard. The Committee encourages its members and observers to mobilize their respective civil societies at the national level, in particular the youth, and to establish solidarity committees with the State of Palestine.

90. The Committee looks forward to further developing its cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations. Parliamentarians have a special responsibility to ensure that their Governments actively promote and support the realization of the two-State solution and uphold their obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

91. The Committee will reach out to all regional groups at the United Nations with a view to expanding its membership. It will actively work to organize more thematic debates on the question of Palestine in various United Nations forums. The Committee intends to request that the General Assembly proclaim an International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Committee believes that its increased workload should be adequately supported by an expanded Bureau.

92. The Committee requests the Division to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities, in support of the Committee's communication strategy. The Division should pay special attention to continued development of the "Question of Palestine" portal, including the addition of a mobile-device-friendly version, and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It should also continue to develop the UNISPAL document collection by reflecting current issues and events, as well as by continuing to digitize and upload historical documents and to add user-friendly search features. The Division should continue to collaborate with the United Nations

Libraries at Headquarters and at Geneva in the search for historic documents. It should further enhance the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Government, paying special attention to the programme's gender balance, and optimize the use of resources to allow the maximum number of participants possible. Voluntary contributions from members and observers in line with their capacity are to be encouraged to put the programme on a solid financial footing. The Committee also commends its members and observers which instituted training programmes at the national level to build Palestinian capacity.

93. The Division should continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

94. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and the public of the relevant issues. It requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

95. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and their leadership and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join it in this endeavour and to extend their cooperation and support to the Committee, and invites the General Assembly again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate.

IV. SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES UN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SEMINAR ON PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST HELD IN ISTANBUL

The following is the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the 2013 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, as delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Peter Laursky-Tieffenthal, in Istanbul on 8 October 2013:

I am pleased to send greetings to all the participants of this international media seminar on peace in the Middle East. I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey for hosting this event.

This meeting comes at a time of renewed hope for the Middle East Peace Process. While many challenges remain, the resumption of direct talks is a welcome step towards reaching an agreement on an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace with a secure Israel.

For this new effort to succeed, Israelis and Palestinians must quickly see visible peace dividends. The status quo in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is not sustainable, and in the long run, the occupation is deeply damaging to Israelis and Palestinians alike. An enabling environment for economic progress is more urgent than ever.

The Israeli and Palestinian leadership and people face hard choices, but also tremendous opportunity. Absent real political progress, there could be dire consequences. Both should act responsibly

and with restraint, and refrain from incitement and other actions that risk undermining the negotiations or prejudging final status issues. Stability is critical, and maximum efforts should be made to avoid violence and reverse negative trends.

On the margins of the general debate this year, the Middle East Quartet met for the first time in more than a year to support the rejuvenated peace process. The Quartet received a joint briefing by the Israeli and Palestinian chief negotiators, and I was heartened by their commitment to reach a comprehensive agreement on all the core issues.

The international community must work in concert, including through the Quartet, to assist them in forging a way forward for future generations.

Many of you, as journalists, activists, policy-makers and representatives of civil society, have played a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability and democracy. I urge you to continue to advance peace and increase mutual understanding between communities, especially Palestinians and Israelis.

V. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued on 9 October 2013 the report entitled “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan” under agenda item: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/68/513). The report had been prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/120. It focuses on the different ways in which the Government of Israel has contributed to the creation and expansion of settlements by controlling the land and granting benefits and incentives to settlers. The report covers the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. The conclusions and recommendations of the report are reproduced below:

...

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

55. Despite past commitments to freeze settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel has over the years been playing a leading role in, and supporting and encouraging, the establishment and expansion of, settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan through many different means. In contravention of its international legal obligations, Israel has failed to ensure public order in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to protect Palestinians against violent acts committed by settlers. Israel has also failed to ensure accountability for settler violence.

56. The Government of Israel must stop playing a leading role in, and supporting and encouraging the establishment and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. In particular, it should stop using the requisition and expropriation of land and the allocation of State land for the establishment and expansion of settlements and should halt the granting of benefits and incentives to settlements and settlers. Israel must enforce the existing applicable laws against settlers who take over land, whether it is State land

or privately owned. Israel must also refrain from issuing permits and licences to private companies seeking to exploit and profit from the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

57. Israel must bring its legislation, policies and practices into compliance with its international legal obligations and its commitments set out in the road map, including by immediately ceasing the transfer of its population to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and by completely ending all settlement activity. Israel must also implement relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and withdraw from territories occupied in 1967.

58. Israel must cease its discriminatory policies and practices against Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, including by amending the zoning and planning legislation and processes, in order to ensure the full participation of Palestinians throughout the planning process, in accordance with due process standards, and to ensure their right to an effective remedy.

59. Israel, as the occupying Power, must take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of Palestinians and their

property from acts of violence, including through preventive measures. All acts of violence committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property must be investigated independently, impartially, thoroughly, promptly, effectively and in a

non-discriminatory manner. Transparency in investigations should also be ensured. Individuals who are responsible for violations should be prosecuted and victims should be provided with an effective remedy.

VI. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 22 October 2013, the Security Council considered the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, under which the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, gave a briefing. Excerpts of Mr. Feltman’s briefing are reproduced below (S/PV.7047):

The Council meets today at a moment of heightened Middle East diplomacy. Discussions are ongoing on both immediate crises and long-standing sources of tensions in the region, from the Syria catastrophe to the Middle East peace process to questions regarding nuclear proliferation. We believe that last month’s general debate in the General Assembly in New York reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations as a forum for engagement between States and for real diplomatic progress when there is international unity as opposed to division. While the challenges on each front should not be underestimated, it is important to maintain and even increase the momentum behind diplomacy. We encourage and remain committed to supporting the Security Council and its members in fully exploring all the opportunities at hand to resolve peacefully, through dialogue, the difficult issues that bedevil peace and security in the region.

Central to many statements by world leaders in the general debate was the urgent importance of shaping more favourable dynamics across the region and addressing the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The test will be whether and at what pace current efforts can be sustained and gain

traction in response to such concerns and expectations. Many have acknowledged the opportunity at this juncture to save the two-State solution and realize the vision of a viable independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace with a secure Israel.

On 27 September, for the first time in 17 months, the Quartet principals met in New York. They were joined by the Israeli and Palestinian chief negotiators for a joint briefing on the progress of the negotiations. Minister Livni and Mr. Erekat reiterated their personal and official commitment to reaching a comprehensive permanent status agreement, and asked for the Quartet and the international community’s support. Both stressed that their shared objective is to end the conflict, based on a vision of two States for two peoples.

The Quartet reaffirmed its determination to lend effective support to their efforts during the prescribed time frame. Acknowledging the leadership of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the Quartet commended their efforts and their commitment to remaining engaged in the negotiations. Quartet partners stressed the importance of reversing negative trends

on the ground in order to advance the direct talks. The Representative of the Quartet, Tony Blair, briefed the group on the Palestinian Economic Initiative, which aims to bring transformative economic growth to the Palestinian economy, running in parallel with the renewed negotiations. The Quartet discussed the humanitarian needs of Gaza's residents and emphasized the importance of increased access to Gaza through legal crossings, while welcoming recent steps taken by Israel in that regard.

In discussing the importance of international support for the negotiations, the Quartet commended the League of Arab States for its constructive role and recognized that many others in the international community have made important contributions. The Quartet envoys will meet again soon as part of their now monthly meetings to report on progress. Since the Quartet meeting, negotiators have picked up the pace of talks and have stated their commitment to abiding by the understanding of not revealing the contents of such discussions. It is encouraging to see an intensified dialogue that demonstrates that both sides are taking ownership.

On 25 September, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians met at the ministerial level and expressed its full support for the ongoing peace negotiations. The Secretary-General called on donors to step up efforts to assist the Palestinian Authority, stressing that "[t]he situation is volatile and the status quo in the occupied Palestinian territory is not sustainable. In the long run, the occupation is deeply damaging to both Israelis and Palestinians". Most participants welcomed the positive gestures announced by Israel, including the easing of restrictions, as yielding visible improvements on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Despite the welcome intensification of negotiations, there have been worrisome developments on the ground that we cannot ignore. I wish to reiterate the unequivocal call by the United Nations on all to refrain from violence and incitement, reinforce calm and reverse negative trends in order to preserve the tentative opening in the political process.

During the reporting period, Palestinians shot and killed two Israeli soldiers in apparently unrelated incidents on 20 and 22 September. President Abbas publicly condemned the incidents, and Israeli and Palestinian security officials held coordination meetings to prevent an escalation of violence. Palestinians injured seven Israeli soldiers, including one on 17 October when a Palestinian attacked an Israeli military base with a bulldozer prior to being shot dead. Israeli security forces carried out a total of 334 operations. One resulted in the killing of an Islamic Jihad militant in the Jenin refugee camp. Demonstrations, including some against the barrier, resulted in numerous injuries. During the reporting period, Israeli forces injured at least 290 Palestinians, including 114 children and two women. A total of 311 Palestinians were arrested.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reported numerous incidents of stones and Molotov cocktails thrown at both civilian and military targets. It announced the arrest of Palestinian terror suspects and the confiscation of weapons and improvised explosive devices. Palestinian security forces, continuing their work to maintain security in the West Bank, safely defused three unexploded devices. Intra-Palestinian clashes with armed militants during a large security operation on 5 October in Jenin refugee camp resulted in several injuries, including to Palestinian security personnel, and about 100 arrests.

Settlement activity is an obstacle to peace and against international law. Clashes between Palestinians and settlers were also ongoing. In an incident still under investigation, a Palestinian beat to death one Israeli settler, a retired IDF colonel, in the Jordan Valley on 11 October. In another Palestinian attack, five Israeli settlers were injured, including a nine-year old girl, on 5 October in the settlement of Psagot near Ramallah.

Israeli settlers injured eight Palestinians, including three children. So-called price tag attacks included the desecration in two instances of tombstones in Christian cemeteries in Jerusalem and a mosque in the Palestinian village of Burqa on 10 October. On 6 October, Israeli security forces reported the arrest of 14 Israeli minors from Jerusalem, allegedly involved in such attacks in recent months.

Multiple incidents of settler attacks against Palestinian farmers and orchards damaged over 1,080 trees and saplings. This is of particular concern given that the olive-picking season — a source of livelihood for thousands of Palestinians — is currently under way. We welcome the enhanced efforts of the Israeli military in recent years to provide protection for Palestinian farmers and facilitate access to their olive groves at this time of year, and we urge that such efforts be expanded year round.

In a worrying development, clashes broke out on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount between Israelis and Palestinian worshippers, in what Palestinians see as growing provocations on that holy site. This drew sharp criticism, including from the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. Incitement from any quarter must cease and the sanctity of holy sites of all faiths must be respected.

The demolition of a total of 58 structures — the third such incident of collective demolitions in recent months — displaced the 48-member Bedouin community of Kfar Makhoul. On 3 October, the Israeli military demolished the tents subsequently established by the community, some with assistance provided by international humanitarian agencies. Such incidents reinforce the United Nations conviction that Palestinians require access to a fair planning and zoning regime so as not to be compelled to resort to the building of structures without an Israeli permit, which leads to demolitions. We also remind Israel of its obligations to facilitate humanitarian assistance to communities in need.

We welcome the recent implementation by the IDF of some of UNICEF's recommendations from its March 2013 report "Children in Israeli military detention". We encourage further measures to improve the treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military custody.

The calm in the Gaza Strip is showing worrying signs of erosion. On 13 October, the IDF announced that it had uncovered a mile-long tunnel constructed with slabs of concrete, from Gaza into Israel — the third tunnel discovered in a year. Hamas senior leadership claimed responsibility for the construction, suggesting its potential use for kidnapping operations to facilitate the release of Palestinian prisoners. We condemn the construction of such tunnels, which are in violation of the November 2012 ceasefire understanding. The use of hundreds of tons of cement in the construction of the tunnel, when cement is critically needed for civilian goals in Gaza, is also deeply disturbing. Furthermore, in rejecting Hamas' stated justification for the tunnel, the United Nations continues to reject any incitement to violence or attempted denial of Israel's right to exist.

In another violation of the November ceasefire understanding, Palestinians launched a total of five rockets and one mortar shell into Israel, resulting in no injuries or damage, while another nine rockets reportedly dropped into Gaza. Israel conducted seven incursions into the Gaza Strip. Israeli forces shot one Palestinian militant dead on 30 September and injured another on 17 September. Three Palestinian civilians were reportedly injured by Israeli live fire in the border area.

Following the tunnel discovery, the Government of Israel temporarily suspended the transfer of construction material through the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza. We fully recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, but we remind Israeli officials of the needs of Gaza's residents, including for construction material for civilian use that must enter Gaza through legal crossings. The people of Gaza are suffering from the rise in food insecurity, a significant energy problem affecting the health, water and sanitation sectors, and restrictions imposed on movement of people for medical and educational reasons, with Rafah crossing open for 16 out of 36 days during this period.

We are grateful for Turkey's donation of \$850,000 to the Palestinian Authority for the purchase of fuel to generate electricity for essential health and sanitation services in Gaza, to be implemented with United Nations assistance. While longer-term engagement will be needed to address structural issues affecting service provision to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, this is a welcome stopgap measure to provide a safety net and mitigate the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Turkey also donated 10,000 metric tons of flour to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) — a critical contribution to the Agency's emergency food assistance.

On 2 October, a man convicted of murder was executed in Gaza. The United Nations position against such executions is well-known.

At a complex juncture for the Middle East, we remind Member States that UNRWA continues to face serious financial difficulties. A deficit of \$48 million in its budget for education, health and poverty mitigation work threatens the provision of essential services to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In a special meeting chaired by the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on 26 September, participants agreed to sustain and increase support to the agency. Reports of Palestine refugees fleeing Syria being lost in boat that capsized off Egypt, and an increase in the death toll of Palestinian refugees in Syria from the escalation of fighting in Dera'a, Yarmouk and other camps in Rif Damascus, underline the urgent need to address the extreme vulnerability of Palestinian refugees in the current conflict and thereby uphold the promise of sustained engagement with UNRWA.

...

In conclusion, let me return to where I started, with an acknowledgment of the emerging opportunities for diplomacy before us across a range of issues that foment tension across an interconnected region. On the Middle East peace process, we should do all we can to take advantage of the opening that now exists. That can only help the Palestinian and Israeli people, and the entire region. After 20 years of talks and too many negative developments on the ground, we do not need lengthy negotiations. What we and

the parties need are decisions — the right decisions — and leaders who are committed to usher in an agreed political solution. The United Nations, through the Quartet, alongside broader engagement with all the relevant partners, stands ready to contribute to what we all so fervently hope to see come

to fruition, that is, the creation of two States for two peoples living side by side in peace and security. Despite the difficult regional context and the challenges on the ground between Israel and Palestine, this is not an opportunity that either can afford to lose.

VII. SECRETARY-GENERAL DEPLORES ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT PLANS

The following statement was issued on 30 October 2013 by the Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (SG/SM/15427):

The Secretary-General deplores the announcements today of further Israeli settlement plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Settlement activity is contrary to international law and constitutes an obstacle to peace. Any measures that prejudice final status issues will not be recognised by the international community.

The Secretary-General understands that Israel took a difficult step in continuing to

release Palestinian pre-Oslo prisoners in the face of deep domestic opposition, and appreciates this gesture. In keeping with the statement by the Quartet on 27 September, the Secretary-General expects the parties to take every possible step to promote conditions conducive to the success of the negotiating process and to refrain from actions that undermine trust.