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President: Mr. Rosacha (Acting Vice-President) (Slovakia)

Contents

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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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*In the absence of Mr. Kapambwe (President), Mr. Rosacha (Slovakia), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.**The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/66/78-E/2011/13 and E/2011/L.45)

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Mr. Nour (Director, Regional Commissions Office, New York), speaking on behalf of Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, presenting the Note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan ([A/66/78-E/2011/13](#)), said that while the Arab world was witnessing the dawn of a new era that promised a movement towards freedom and good governance, the Israeli occupation persisted with injustice, human rights violations and devastating economic and social repercussions on the lives of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General's Note was a modest summary of Israeli policies and measures and their impact on the lives, society and economy of the Palestinian people, highlighting a pattern of collective punishment and illegal dispossession of Palestinians that had continued for decades.

In 2010 over 430 Palestinian homes had been demolished, displacing around 600 people and affecting the livelihood of more than 14,000. Since 2004, at least 21,000 Palestinians had been left homeless as a result of the systematic policy of dispossession, which also included land confiscation, home and other construction restrictions, deportation and population displacement. The magnitude and systemic nature of those policies had been most apparent in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where the Israeli settler population had increased by 68 per cent between 1997 and 2010, representing more than double the overall natural growth of the population of Israel during the same period.

The report also examined other policies of dispossession, discrimination and violation of Palestinian human rights, including restrictions on the mobility of Palestinians on their own territory. Palestinians wishing to move in the West Bank, for example, faced over 500 obstacles, such as checkpoints, roadblocks, sand mounds and other physical barriers, including the separation wall, which had been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice. The wall separated Palestinian communities from each other and from their lands and livelihoods, and from basic health and education services. Those measures had also resulted in adverse environmental impacts, including the depletion of water resources. Israel also imposed significant restrictions on Palestinian water use in the West Bank, while itself exploiting over half of the aquifer's potential.

The situation for Palestinian children was particularly alarming: they had been injured and killed in violent acts in defence of Israeli settlers, some had been used as human shields by Israeli security forces, and some as young as 12 years of age were being detained in Israeli prisons. A total of 90 cases of torture against children in Israeli detention facilities had been reported in 2010. The blockade on the Gaza Strip since June 2007 indicated a clear policy of systematic, collective punishment imposed on an entire civilian population, in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The blockade was having a severe impact on every aspect of life for the 1.5 million inhabitants of Gaza. Despite Israel having announced measures to ease the blockade in June 2010, its main parameters remained in place, which included sweeping restrictions on the movement of the people, imports of raw materials and basic construction materials, and the prohibition of the export of many goods.

Palestinians were prevented from accessing much of the agricultural land in the Gaza Strip, as well as from accessing the sea. Over the past year, 98 Palestinians had

been killed and 1,871 injured by Israeli security forces and settlers, largely as a result of air strikes and shootings in restricted areas near the buffer zone around the fence that separated the Gaza Strip from Israel. Homes that had been destroyed in previous strikes had yet to be reconstructed, and 26,500 people remained homeless. Unemployment and poverty rates were soaring, and over half the population lived in a situation of food insecurity. There were fears of environmental and public-health disasters, owing to the deterioration of the quantity and quality of water supplies.

Israel continued its de facto annexation policies in the occupied Syrian Golan, including discrimination against Syrian Arab citizens, in clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolution No. 497. The occupation and the closed crossing into the Syrian Arab Republic constituted the most serious barriers to economic development in the occupied Syrian Golan. Citizens who wished to maintain their Syrian identity faced hardships and severely restricted prospects of earning a decent living. Those abuses of human rights and international law must come to an end, and freedom and dignity must prevail.

Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that more than 44 years had passed since Israel's flagrant attack on the Palestinian lands and the Syrian Golan. Since then, Israel had refused to implement any international resolutions calling on it to withdraw from the occupied territories and enable the residents to return to their land and property. Half a million Syrian citizens had been displaced. One day they would return. Despite the massacres that had been conducted by the Israeli occupying authorities, the displaced would continue their struggle to return and to reaffirm their legal rights. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution No. 194 in 1948, Israel had demolished more than 150 villages and 200 farms in the Syrian Golan. Only five villages remained inhabited. The inhabitants of those villages had resisted all attempts at eviction. They lived surrounded by Israeli settlements, minefields and military barracks.

Since 1967, Israel had sought to Judaize the residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. The number of Syrian prisoners from the Golan increased daily as a result of Israeli campaigns of arrest and ill-treatment. Repressive measures were being taken against farmers, students and workers. The credibility of the United Nations was being brought into question by the international community's abject failure to hold Israel to account. Such double standards should no longer be tolerated. He urged the Council to vote in favour of the draft resolution currently before it (E/2011/L.45), in an expression of support for the long-suffering people of the Syrian Golan.

Mr. Hassan Ibrahim (Egypt) said that the Council was, once again, considering the economic and social impact of the Israeli occupation, rather than discussing ways and means of supporting the Palestinian economy with a view to establishing an independent Palestinian State, or of improving the living conditions of Arab peoples under occupation.

Israel was continuing its practices of repression in the occupied Palestinian territories in violation of international human rights law. Israeli practices were intended to gradually demolish the Palestinian economy. The impacts of those negative practices were reflected in the two reports currently before the Council. As many as 2.4 million Palestinians lived below the poverty line. Israel continued to build blockades and checkpoints, and had constructed a wall that separated families and severely restricted freedom of movement, including access to health services. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem had lost their right to permanent residence. The expropriation of Palestinian land had increased since 2009, and hundreds of Palestinians were being detained in Israeli prisons. Repressive measures used by Israel were having a severe economic, social and psychological impact on the Palestinian people, in particular women and children. Israeli plans for urban development in Jerusalem would expand the Israeli presence to the detriment of the original residents.

Egypt had opened its borders to the Palestinian people, in an attempt to alleviate their suffering. However, that measure was insufficient: the blockades must be removed and policies in violation of international law must be brought to an end. The Israeli occupation of Arab territories in general must cease. Israel was inflicting a similar degree of suffering in the Syrian Golan. It must withdraw, and peace must be established along with economic and social prosperity for all.

Mr. Alaqil (Saudi Arabia) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, gave details of the sufferings of the Palestinian and Arab peoples as a result of the continued Israeli occupation and the violation of their social, economic and other human rights. Their freedom of movement was strictly controlled while humanitarian assistance, in particular to the Gaza Strip, was being blocked. The Israelis continued to evict Palestinians from their homes and destroy their housing; in 2010, more demolitions had been recorded than in any other year since 2005. The collective punishment meted out to the populations had undermined the economy, worsening their social and economic conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, despite the efforts of United Nations agencies working in the region. The Palestinian people were in dire need of further assistance.

In his message to the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in March 2011, the Secretary-General had said that the occupation must end and that the Palestinians had a right to an independent State. Occupation was itself the greatest violation of human rights but the other violations mentioned in the report only exacerbated the poor living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Since the Oslo Peace Process the population of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories had more than doubled. By expanding the settlements and expelling the original inhabitants, Israel deliberately aimed to change the geographical complexion of the territories in violation of international law, with a view to delaying the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. He called on the Council to take all the necessary measures to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan.

Mr. Bocar Ly (Senegal) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation had been unable to take into account the Fatah-Hamas agreement brokered by Egypt and signed in May 2011, which Senegal welcomed. Nor did the report mention the vital role of the Quartet on the Middle East in finding a solution to the issue of Palestine. Nevertheless it described the difficult living conditions of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

In view of the concerns about the Palestinians' long-term economic prospects, he called for more assistance to be given to diversify the economy, while ensuring access to natural resources and basic services, currently hampered by the restrictions on mobility. The role of donors would be crucial in enabling the Palestinians to offset their budget deficit, currently standing at US\$ 300 million. On an official World Food Programme visit to the Gaza Strip in 2005, he had witnessed the plight of Palestinian fishermen and urged the Secretary-General to pay special attention to them. He condemned the illegal construction of the dividing wall and the degradation of the environment in the occupied territories, and wondered why the report made no mention of the potential role of the United Nations Environment Programme. Moreover, the report lacked any reference to the role of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies or to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

In June 2011, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations had said that the Palestinian Authority was above the international threshold for a functioning State yet, as described in the summary of the Secretary-General's report, the continued occupation of their territory constrained the successful functioning of Palestinian institutions. As Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and a member of the Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, Senegal called for the establishment of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing in peace and security with Israel.

Mr. Toro Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), aligning his delegation with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China, noted that the Secretary-General's report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation referred to the Israeli Government's continued constraints on the functioning of the Palestinian Authority's institutions and the worsening of the Palestinians' economic and social conditions. Moreover, the occupying Power continued to violate international law while impeding the social and economic development of all the occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.

His country condemned the Israeli blockade of the occupied territories as a collective punishment of their populations, meted out along with serious and systematic violations of human rights and international law. Israel continued to expand its settlements in East Jerusalem while illegally expelling Palestinians from their homes. The United Nations should continue to work towards the realization of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on international law and all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, putting an end to the occupation and establishing a sovereign Palestinian State. Israel must immediately end its blockade and the international community should take more effective measures to force Israel to stop violating human rights with impunity and the complicity of the imperial Power.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation confirmed that the Palestinian people continued to suffer as a result of the Israeli blockade, which isolated them from regional and international markets and undermined their productive capacity. The limited easing of the blockade on the Gaza Strip in June 2010 had not improved the social and economic situation of its inhabitants; Palestine and its productive base could only be reconstructed if Israel fully lifted its blockade. Long-term improvements were impossible without a lasting solution involving the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinians needed technical and financial assistance to build human resource capacities, develop international trade and enhance their productive capacity. In view of the changing situation in the region, the Council should examine ways of protecting the basic rights of the Palestinian people, providing them with the wherewithal to establish an independent State living in peace and security alongside Israel. He welcomed the clear position of the United States of America on the need to establish a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 frontiers. Morocco hoped that it would lead to

negotiations on all the final status aspects, taking into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Khan (Observer for Indonesia) ...

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The report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, had confirmed that, as Israel repeatedly violated international law and United Nations resolutions, the Palestinians and Arab populations in the occupied territories continued to face economic and social hardship. The unemployment rate had doubled in the past decade and the Palestinian economy remained volatile. Since the main obstacle to social and economic development was the Israeli occupation, Indonesia welcomed the recent steps by several States to recognize the State of Palestine within its 1967 borders and urged others to follow suit, either individually or through their regional organizations.

While slow progress was made towards recognition of a Palestinian State, Indonesia encouraged the international community to support the rehabilitation and development of Palestinian national institutions. In June 2011, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations had declared that the Palestinian Authority had been found to be above the international threshold for a functioning State. However, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the continuing Palestinian divide prevented the Palestinian Authority from reaching certain locations, including East Jerusalem. Indonesia supported the Strategic Capacity Development Programmes in Support of Palestinian State Building and encouraged donors to contribute to it and other United Nations initiatives. The United Nations agencies working on humanitarian issues in the region, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, needed to be further empowered and he hoped that the relevant draft resolution would be adopted.

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The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

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