



**DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**ELEVENTH UNITED NATIONS
NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

*Toronto, Canada
6 - 8 July 1994*

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Note: Copies of the papers presented by some of the panelists can be made available by the Division for Palestinian Rights upon request.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at Toronto, Canada, from 6 to 8 July 1994, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/158 B of 20 December 1993. The theme of the Symposium was "Palestine: Towards a just and lasting peace; Focus on mobilizing NGO support for cooperation and development".
2. A total of 61 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Canada and the United States of America participated in the work of the Symposium, 30 of them as observers, as well as 18 panelists, 20 facilitators and resource persons for workshops and representatives of 15 Governments.
3. The Committee for the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman; Mr. Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur.
4. The Symposium was opened by Mr. Mac Harb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, on behalf of the Government of Canada. The opening and closing meetings were chaired by Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. At the opening, statements were made by Mr. Cissé; Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, who read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority; and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC), who moderated the plenary sessions of the Symposium.
5. At the first plenary, entitled "The Declaration of Principles: Taking stock of the situation", presentations were made by Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations; Mr. Mervyn M. Dymally, United States Congressman (ret.) and Mr. Aaron Back, B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.
6. At the second plenary, entitled "The Declaration of Principles: United Nations involvement and the North American NGO movement", presentations were made by Mr. Johan Nordenfelt, Director of the General Assembly and Trusteeship Council Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat; Mr. Jawad Squali, Chairman of the Board of the Centre d'études arabes pour le développement; Mr. Anis Al-Qaq, Member of the Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territories; Ms. Phyllis Bennis, journalist, and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of NACC.
7. At the third plenary, two panels were established. In the first panel, entitled "Strengthening civil and social structures", presentations were made by Dr. Eyad El Sarraj, Director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme; Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee, and Mr. Norman Cook, Director of Non-Governmental Organizations, Canadian Partnership Branch of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The second panel, entitled "Development and the United Nations system", was subdivided into (a) "Promoting Human Rights", and a presentation was made by Ms. Janice Abu-Shakrah, Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (PHRIC) in Jerusalem; and (b) "Promoting Development", in which presentations were made by Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee; Mr. Francis Dubois, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Mr. William Lee, Chief, Liaison Office, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), New York.
8. At the fourth plenary, entitled "Looking ahead: key issues", presentations were made by Ms. Janice Abu-Shakrah, PHRIC; Ms. Sarah Kaminker, Planning consultant for neighbourhood organizations in West and East Jerusalem; Mr. Naseer Aruri, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and Mr. Marc Perron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa and the Middle East Branch,

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada and Chairman of the Multilateral Working Group on Refugees.

9. Six workshops were held on: economic development, health and educational needs, promoting coexistence, defending human rights, working with the media and the Palestinian women's experience in development. The reports of workshops I and VI can be found in annex II.

II. OPENING STATEMENTS

10. In his opening statement, Mr. Mac Harb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade of Canada, said that it was the second time Canada had had the opportunity to host the NGO Symposium. The Government of Canada was particularly pleased that the Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine should take place in Canada, so soon after the historic signing of the Gaza-Jericho agreement in May 1994.

11. The Symposium marked an important shift in the debate on the situation of Palestinians, to a new agenda for the future, a future of reconstruction, of peaceful economic and democratic development and especially of an entirely new relationship between old adversaries.

12. Canada had played, and would continue to play, an important role in the search for peace in the Middle East through the United Nations, through contributions to peace-keeping, and through sustained and substantial contribution to UNRWA and other international agencies.

13. Canada had committed \$55 million over five years towards development projects in the light of the Declaration of Principles. The Honorable David Collenette, Minister of National Defence of Canada, had recently toured the Golan, and had committed Canada to further participation in peace-keeping in that region should the Governments of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic request it.

14. Canada had also played a key role in the multilateral track of the peace process, in particular, for the Refugee Working Group, chaired by Mr. Marc Perron, Assistant Deputy Minister for the Middle East and Africa of Canada.

15. He stressed that the role of the non-governmental community was one of the most essential means of securing peace, not only because of its human resources, its idealism, experience and dedication, but also because of its critical role, which no money or military could replace.

16. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, expressed the Committee's gratitude to the Government of Canada for its participation and recalled Canada's significant contribution to the peace process and to development efforts as well as its innovative approach towards cooperative work with the NGO sector. He also expressed appreciation for the work of the NGOs and the leading role played by NACC.

17. He said that the Symposium was being held at a particularly challenging and promising time in view of the transitional period of self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, which necessitated vigilance and support of the international community as a whole, and the United Nations in particular.

18. Many sensitive aspects remained to be negotiated, such as the permanent status arrangements regarding Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders and other issues. Efforts were needed to stop the serious deterioration of the economy and the infrastructure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

19. The Committee, while appreciating the position of the Israeli Government in furthering the peace efforts with the Palestinians, had noted that still much

remained to be done in terms of restoring respect for human rights in the areas still under occupation, in particular the continued presence of armed settlers, the expansion of settlements, and the fragmentation of the occupied territory, including the isolation of East Jerusalem. The Committee considered that these activities were a threat to the peace process and were in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

20. The Committee had also noted that plans for economic assistance and development programmes had been undertaken by various agencies of the United Nations system and welcomed in that regard the appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. With a view to contributing to ongoing efforts, the Committee had organized a Seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs, at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, from 20 to 22 June 1994.

21. In the light of the beginning of the implementation of the interim self-rule, the role of the international community was essential in monitoring the process and providing the necessary material aid for reconstruction and development. The Palestinians had taken the first step towards the full exercise of their inalienable rights, and deserved full and continued support.

22. Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. The message is reproduced in annex IV to the present bulletin.

23. Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of NACC, expressed his appreciation to the Government of Canada for hosting the meeting and for its special relationship with the Canadian NGOs. The approach taken by the Canadian Government had been positive and constructive and he particularly commended its policy on human rights, its support for UNRWA and its efforts to be supportive of civil society.

24. Describing the characteristics of the organized NGO movement in North America, he stated that NGOs had worked very hard at learning to work together; their diversity provided an abundance of human resources, and a wealth of collective experience. They also had put together a network that addressed the Palestine question from a specific North American framework, reflecting its own realities.

25. Mr. Ekin stressed the basic principles of the work of the North American NGOs on the question of Palestine. NGOs had consistently upheld the principle and the ideal of a peaceful political and diplomatic solution and had supported the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to national self-determination and to live securely within well-defined borders. As a matter of principle, that included the right of refugees to return. The NGO movement also consistently upheld human rights and insisted that all Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must cease.

26. The dramatic changes since the last symposium in June 1993 required the formulation of a coordinated response by NGOs, and that effort should be the focus of the Symposium. Recognizing the positive developments should not obscure the fact that the occupation was not over yet.

III. PLENARY DISCUSSION

A. Plenary 1

"The Declaration of Principles: Taking stock of the situation"

27. Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, who spoke in a personal capacity, gave an analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and of the peace process.

28. He stated that the present stage had begun with the intifadah, which had started in December 1987, and had led to the reinvigoration of the Palestinian cause. He recalled the unsuccessful initiative of United States Secretary of State George Shultz, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the concept of stages and the convening of an international peace conference.

29. He also recalled the Palestinian "peace offensive", culminating in the adoption of the "Declaration of Independence" by the Palestine National Council in November 1988, which accepted Security Council resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, hence the existence of Israel and the adoption of a two-State solution.

30. Subsequently, speaking at Geneva where the General Assembly was meeting in view of the United States' refusal to grant him a visa, Mr. Arafat had recognized "the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, including the State of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours, according to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)". He had also stated that "we totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism". An attempt to establish a dialogue with the United States had taken place but it had not achieved any results and had been ended in June 1990.

31. Continuing, Mr. Al-Kidwa referred to the Israeli peace initiative of May 1989 which, however, excluded any possibility for negotiations with the PLO and any change in the status of "Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district".

32. The Palestinian leadership had accordingly reached the conclusion that neither Israel nor the United States was ready to make the necessary changes in their positions and that all political concessions made by the Palestinian side had gone unrewarded. Such a conclusion had clearly affected the subsequent decisions and choices made by the Palestinian leadership.

33. The Gulf war had created a new political configuration and undertakings that a more balanced approach would be followed in future with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A new initiative under President George Bush had culminated in the convening of the Middle East Peace Conference at Madrid in October 1991. The Palestinian delegation had been composed exclusively of residents of the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians living in Jerusalem had not been allowed to participate.

34. After 10 rounds of bilateral negotiations at Washington, it had become apparent that the agreed mechanism and the tactical approaches of the parties to the peace process were not conducive to peace. Palestinians had been dissatisfied with the United States position which they considered too close to that of Israel, and they had been concerned about Israel's stalling tactics. Meanwhile, beginning at the end of 1992, an Israeli-PLO negotiating channel had been established - the "Oslo channel". That had led at a later stage to the Declaration of Principles, which had been signed by the parties on 13 September 1993 at Washington.

35. The Declaration of Principles represented an important change from the basic formula of Madrid, while keeping the essence of the Camp David formula, namely a solution in two stages. From the Palestinian perspective, the most important changes were the recognition by Israel of the Palestinian people and its legitimate rights and just requirements, and of the PLO as its representative, the specification of the elements of the final settlement and Israel's acceptance to negotiate them. Two other important changes were agreement for the holding a general election with the participation of the Palestinian Jerusalemites and a mechanism for the return of persons displaced since 1967. In return, the PLO had reiterated its positions regarding recognition of Israel, renunciation of terrorism, the commitment to abrogate certain articles of the covenant and the acceptance of a new concept of initiating the self-government arrangements on part of the occupied territory, namely in Gaza and Jericho, as a first stage. Following its signing, the two parties had proceeded to negotiations for implementation of the agreement and concluded the agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, which was signed at Cairo on 4 May 1994.

36. Pointing out some of the limits and difficulties in the agreements reached, Mr. Al-Kidwa stated that with regard to the future, the most important step was to

move directly to negotiation of the second implementation agreement, which should extend the self-governing authority to the rest of the West Bank. The holding of the general elections was no less important. Finally, sufficient attention must be given to the issue of reconstruction and development which needed extensive international assistance, which until now had not been forthcoming, despite the pledges made.

37. Mr. Mervyn M. Dymally, retired United States Congressman, said that the Declaration of Principles was a triumph because it had given some hope to the Palestinians who longed for a Palestinian State, and it had been accomplished without the help of the United States.

38. He recalled that in the 12 years he had served as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee had been dominated by policy-making apparatus of the Foreign Affairs Committee, as it related to Israel and Palestine. It was the United States' Under-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who had decreed that there should be no dialogue between the Americans and the PLO. And it was the United States Congress which had put that decree into federal Law.

39. At that time, a political phenomenon had emerged in the United States known as targeting. Any member of Congress who had displayed any support for peace in the Middle East, or the Palestinians in particular, had been targeted for defeat. Senator Charles Percy and Congressman Paul Findley had been two outstanding examples. But more discouraging was the fact that the United States kept supplying arms and technology to Israel which had the effect of frustrating any peace initiative.

40. Mr. Dymally mentioned that there were 144 illegal settlements built on Arab land occupied since 1967 by Israeli military forces. To make way for those settlements, Palestinian properties had been seized and homes and entire villages leveled. And yet, under the Geneva Convention, and the provisions of the United Nations Charter, which Israel had signed, settlements were known to be illegal. Settlers were granted privileges. For example, they dominated local water supplies, had no difficulty getting permits to build wells and buildings and were free to move about unrestricted. Curfews were choking the Palestinian economy.

41. Even though those settlements were illegal and oppressive, the United States continued to send billions of dollars to Israel with no strings attached, and with the full knowledge that some of those funds were being used to build those settlements on the West Bank.

42. At present, the major challenge which the Palestinians faced, as they embarked on the partial peace accord, was the ultimate removal of all Israeli troops from the West Bank and recognition by the United Nations of a sovereign nation. It was a known fact that the Israelis were opposed to a Palestinian State, and they expressed that opposition with a full knowledge that if a resolution were to be accepted in the Security Council, the United States would exercise a veto.

43. Mr. Dymally asserted that the Palestinians had a major job to do in the United States, since the legal threat had been eliminated now, not only in Congress, but in all supporting agencies of the Federal Government. First, Palestinians must do as other groups had done and begin to develop a strong lobby in the United States to influence the behaviour of Congress. Second, they must bring under an umbrella all of the Arab-American groups and friends of Palestine in order to develop a support system all over the United States.

44. The work which lay ahead for the Palestinians was an awesome one. They were faced with the need to develop an entire infrastructure and the necessity of bringing together all political groups in support of a homeland.

45. Mr. Aaron Back, from B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, presented an overview of the current situation regarding human rights from the perspective of an Israeli human rights

organization. He said in the last year there had been some important changes within Israeli society which had implications for human rights.

46. As a result of the ongoing negotiations, of appearances by Palestinian representatives in the media and greater direct contact between the peoples, Israelis were undergoing a process in which Palestinians, for so long characterized as "other" - defined only as terrorists or as not human - were beginning to be de-demonized.

47. That had contributed to a chipping away at the mechanisms of denial, rationalization and justification which, since the beginning of the occupation, had enabled many Israelis to tolerate the human rights violations by their Government. That change was a positive development; but was only partial and gradual. Human rights violations still continued, as did lack of interest by the Israeli public.

48. The fact that the military government would continue to exist after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority was very significant and the concrete consequences would be: (a) the legal status of the West Bank and Gaza would continue to be that of occupied territories; (b) the Fourth Geneva Convention would continue to apply, with Palestinians as protected persons under the Convention; (c) the Israeli Government would retain de facto veto power; (d) the Declaration of Principles provided that the Palestinian Authority would have no powers in relation to issues such as external security and settlements; and (e) as a result there were distinct power imbalances inherent in the accord. Moreover, some issues were still unclear, such as regarding financial responsibility by Israel for acts committed prior to the transfer of powers.

49. He said that regarding human rights issues it was difficult to assess firm trends in relation to human rights violations since the political accords, because the situation was still not stable. There were areas where human rights violations by Israeli authorities were likely and these included closure, use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces, failure to enforce the law against illegal actions by Israeli settlers, sanctions against opponents of the peace process, and Jerusalem.

50. The most difficult stages of the peace process lay ahead and the most intractable issues, each with human rights implications, were the final status of Jerusalem, refugees, Israeli settlements and final security arrangements. It was vitally important that pressure be maintained on the Israeli policy makers and that Israel be pressed to accept the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant standards such as conventions concerning torture, discrimination, women and children.

51. It was also very important to call the attention of the international community to the fact that occupation still continued, even in Gaza and Jericho, and certainly in the rest of the West Bank and to link human rights issues in political talks with the United Nations .

52. As an active supporter of the Israeli-PLO peace process, the United States could use its influence with both sides to promote respect for human rights as the peace process moves forward. Beyond this, there were serious issues that the administration must confront head-on, such as torture.

B. Plenary 2

"The Declaration of Principles:

United Nations involvement and the North American NGO movement"

53. Mr. Johan Nordenfelt, Director, General Assembly and Trusteeship Council Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat, described the United Nations involvement in the multilateral negotiations which started in 1992 within the Madrid process. Although those negotiations had become somewhat overshadowed by the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement, they dealt with very crucial issues and contributed to confidence and security-building in the area. He then

described the new role of the United Nations in the territories in response to the new political events.

54. Regarding the Madrid process, he described progress made in the Working Group on Security and Arms Control; the Working Group on the Environment; the Working Group on Water; the Working Group on Refugees; and the Economic Development Group.

55. Describing the role of the United Nations in development assistance, he stated that, for the first time, the annual resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, which among other things stressed the role the United Nations could play, had been adopted by consensus. The resolution also asked that coordination of activities of the United Nations system in the territories be improved through an appropriate mechanism under the auspices of the Secretary-General so as to find an adequate response to the new developments. This was a new starting point for the United Nations.

56. In May 1994, the Secretary-General had appointed Ambassador Terje Roed Larsen of Norway as the Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. He would serve as a focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance, would maintain contact with the specialized agencies and the World Bank, as well as NGOs and the donor community. In addition, he would support the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. He would be stationed at Gaza.

57. Among important recent developments were the fact that the World Bank had received donor commitments of \$86 millions for UNRWA and \$42 million for UNDP for projects which would generate new jobs. UNRWA would be moving to Gaza from Vienna - a very important step in the United Nations engagement in the area - and its local personnel could provide a pool of trained staff for the new Palestinian Authority. Moreover, the United Nations Secretariat had put together a training programme for the new Palestinian police force with the assistance of a number of countries.

58. Mr. Jawad Sgalli, Chairman of the Board of the Centre d'études arabes pour le développement, broached the general question of the present and potential activities of Canadian NGOs in the Middle East. He stressed the active role played by those NGOs in the current review of Canadian foreign policy. NGOs had participated individually and through their coalition, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), in the consultations held by the Canadian Government as part of the review. The positions held by CCIC were fully relevant to the Palestinian situation and could be resumed in the following manner.

59. The capacity and autonomy of NGOs and grass-roots groups must be maintained and strengthened. A Palestinian State was being constructed and, in common with all other States, would need a counterweight. The Canadian NGOs strongly recommended that their Government should allocate a minimum of 25 per cent of international cooperation budgets in support of NGOs.

60. Foreign aid as it existed today essentially served the strategic and commercial interests of the donor countries. CCIC was proposing, as a change of policy, that a minimum of 60 per cent of aid budgets should be allocated to priority human needs such as food security, primary health and education, drinking water, housing and promotion of women. Canada currently allocated between 10 and 15 per cent of its aid budget to those sectors, which was better than most donor countries, but still inadequate in view of actual needs.

61. Lastly, CCIC insisted on the need for substantial sums to be allocated to awareness-raising, information and education among the Canadian public with regard to international solidarity.

62. Mr. Sgalli concluded by requesting the Canadian Government to establish a decentralized fund, jointly managed by Canadian NGOs under the Middle East Working Group, to finance NGO projects in the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular. Palestinian and Middle East NGOs would be encouraged to establish

coalition machinery and structures in order to create a joint partnership with coalitions in the donor countries.

63. Dr. Anis Al-Qaq, member of the Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the question of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territory, said that the Conference on the "Role of NGOs in the transition to Palestinian statehood", organized by local NGOs in conjunction with international NGOs, from 17 to 19 June 1994, in Jerusalem, had been very successful in terms of participation and the range of views expressed in the course of discussion.

64. He pointed out that a political vacuum still existed in the current transition period because of the limited geographical and political nature of the autonomy agreement and the need to establish a fully democratic process in the territories. In that context, the role of both national and international NGOs was becoming more crucial than ever.

65. He described the role of NGOs in the transition period vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and each other. NGOs had in the course of the occupation built up great expertise and skilled human resources. The Palestinian Authority should call upon that source of experience in order to help build its presence and develop its policies and to lay the foundations of a Palestinian State.

66. As local NGOs were often the "service arm" of different political factions across the Palestinian political scene, it was imperative that they form a national committee, democratically elected, as a counterpart to the Palestinian Authority in order to tap the resources available in the interest of Palestinian socio-economic and political development. In order to achieve the institutionalization and professionalization of their role, NGOs needed to expand their own regulations to achieve accountability and maintain their credibility.

67. Regarding the role of United Nations agencies, he stated that all of them had some relations with the NGO community, but were currently becoming more involved in dealing with their public sector counterparts. That was as it should be. In the transition period however, those agencies should not focus exclusively on the current power structures but keep ties open to all layers of decision making in the development process.

68. He went on to say that in the current situation, international NGOs had a two-fold course of action to take:

(a) To raise awareness about the continuation of the occupation until early empowerment of the rest of the West Bank was in place and equally to draw attention to the status of Jerusalem;

(b) To assist local NGOs to establish their own "facts on the ground" to counter the continuous "de-Arabization" of the City of Jerusalem. Specific development projects could be undertaken. Support for cultural institutions deserved special attention. Culture reinforced a sense of national identity and belonging.

69. Ms. Phyllis Bennis, journalist, saw a particular irony in the fact that despite its role in the partition of Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel, the United Nations had been systematically excluded from the peace process, especially regarding Palestine, since 1974. Throughout that time, the United Nations continued to play the key role in humanitarian work and development in the territories. In her view, United States policy regarding Palestine still dominated United Nations political considerations, as exemplified by:

(a) The rejection by the United States and Israel of an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations;

(b) The United States decision to deny a visa to Mr. Yasser Arafat to address the General Assembly in December 1988, in violation of the host country agreement;

(c) The use of the United Nations as a source of legitimacy for the Gulf War;

(d) The delayed United Nations response to the massacre at the Haram Al-Sharif;

(e) The lack of authority of the United Nations representative within the Madrid peace process, and the commitment by the United States that the Security Council would not discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during negotiations;

(f) The repeal of the resolution stating that zionism was a form of racism;

(g) The delayed response by the Security Council to the Hebron massacre, not only because of the references in the resolution to Jerusalem as part of the occupied territories, but also because it authorized a temporary international (non-United Nations) presence as observers in Hebron;

(h) The exclusion of a United Nations role from future security arrangements in the Middle East currently being considered.

70. Ms. Bennis called upon NGOs to be prepared to struggle against efforts to keep Palestine out of the United Nations' political agenda. Democratization of the United Nations remained high on the agenda of the South; one important signpost would be the ability to keep Palestine on the political as well as the humanitarian agendas of the United Nations.

71. Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of NACC, said that the NGO movement in North America was characterized by its bi-national character, which presented a unique model for NGO coalitions, as well as certain challenges in terms of how certain appeals should be framed for action and direct constituents' attention. It also offered opportunities that would multiply effectiveness, giving the NGOs a broader base of experience and a wider range of contacts to draw upon..

72. In addition, its relationship with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and with the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine further distinguished the NACC network from other NGO configurations.

73. He stated that, in 1993, NACC had launched the standing committees with the understanding that they would be a vehicle to achieve continuity and introduce a new level of accountability between symposia and would offer a means for greater involvement by interested NGOs. It would be more important to define modest, achievable goals than to establish unrealistic expectations that could only result in failure. From their inception, a fundamental principle of these committees was that they defined their mandate and plan of work and how to conduct that work. It was unrealistic to expect the NACC office to carry out those assignments.

74. Mr. Ekin pointed out that there was plenty of work to do in the coming year. The occupation was not yet over. Part of the NGO task was to offer that reminder to the general public. At the same time, it was necessary to be open to new people and NGOs and to broaden further the base, and to improve relations and communications with Palestinian NGOs. Given the demise of the International Coordinating Committee office, that task took on even greater importance.

75. Finally, NGOs must reaffirm and deepen their commitment to supporting human rights. Under the new situation, that must extend in a new direction. NGOs should insist on applying the same standard for human rights to the new Palestinian Authority as they had in the past to Israel.

C. Plenary 3

1. "Strengthening civil and social structure"

76. Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj, Director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, described the situation in Gaza after the implementation of the Cairo Agreement had begun as safer, more secure, and happier. Before, there had been a campaign of terror, Palestinians against Palestinians, in addition to the difficult economic situation, poverty and unemployment. At the same time, he stressed that the occupation had not ended, and that the settlements were still there.

77. He said that the Palestinian society was basically patriarchal and tribal and had been collectively traumatized. Those were important characteristics because they would bear on the future of the Palestinian community, and because they had to do with authority, democracy and leadership. Because of the lack of democracy, Palestinian society had reached a devastating stage.

78. Palestinian society had developed characteristics of "victim psychology", which in many ways was a mirror image of the Jews, of the Israelis. Characteristically, the Palestinian community had become helpless and dependent on its aggressor and paradoxically defiant. For centuries, Palestinians had been alienated from the authority and had cultivated many methods of manipulation. But now was a new era in which Palestinians had to identify with the authority, and that had to be learned collectively.

79. He went on to say that in the past seven years about 88,000 Palestinian youths had been jailed and according to the International Red Cross Committee in Gaza, 75 per cent of them had been systematically tortured. About 60,000 Palestinian children in Gaza, below the age of 15, were suffering from some emotional problems that were the direct result of trauma at the hands of Israeli soldiers. They needed psychiatric intervention and other forms of therapy, in particular to break the cycle of violence that was being perpetuated from generation to generation.

80. He expressed the view that funding, power and authority should not be centralized in the hands of the Palestinian Authority but should be shared with the Palestinian non-governmental sector. That was not a question of confrontation but rather a question of building a new culture in which NGOs could contribute to the Palestinian Authority as much as the latter could contribute to the democratic experience and development of the country. There would be no building of a Palestinian society without democracy and participation.

81. Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee, said that NGOs would have an important role to play in the construction of a civil society. She emphasized the importance of construction and development as the Palestinian self-rule government would have the responsibility of proving that the agreements would lead to an improvement in living conditions. She called upon the donor countries and the World Bank to fulfil their promises.

82. She stressed the importance of building a civil society in an environment that did not motivate such a society. The Authority had to prove to its own people and to the international community that positive and visible changes were taking place concerning human rights and democracy.

83. She called for the participation of the whole community in fulfilling the need for a quick and sustainable development. That implied that NGOs and the private sector should be encouraged to continue their role in providing services for the Palestinian people. This would contribute to a healthy environment and a constructive competition.

84. Democratic education was also required. There would be a need to establish organizations whose basic role would be to explain and teach the principles of democracy and the ways of democratic participation and to observe any violation. Various organizations of that kind had emerged recently, women's organizations most prominently.

85. Ms. Kamal called upon the international community and United Nations agencies: to ensure that Governments would keep their promises for support, accelerate the peace process and its implementation; to support the Palestinian NGOs to enable them to perform their tasks; to promote institution-building; to provide training for the observation of the democratic process in all aspects, especially in the training of women cadres; to support the Palestinian economy and encourage the establishment of relations with counterparts in different countries; and to observe the implementation of the Agreement on the part of Israel. She called upon NGOs to ensure, through peace watch groups, that Israeli activities during the interim period did not endanger the forthcoming negotiations for the final period, especially with regard to settlements and East Jerusalem.

86. Mr. Norman Cook, Director of Non-Governmental Organizations, Canadian Partnership Branch of CIDA, described the special relationship between the Canadian Government and the Canadian NGO community and stated that in 1994, 27 per cent of all Canadian development aid had been managed effectively by some 400 NGOs; that percentage was likely to grow over the next few years. The trend towards increased partnerships with the NGO community was growing throughout the donor community and Governments everywhere were coming to recognize the key role of NGOs in securing and advancing democratic development.

87. Mr. Cook added that the relationship between the NGO community and the Government of Canada was the product of hard work. He emphasized the importance of defining a framework and a strong contractual relationship between NGOs and the Government and engaging in a process of consultation.

88. Mr. Cook said that NGOs should be able to establish their autonomy vis-à-vis the Government. They should be prepared to share costs and not become overtly dependent. That was true not only in Canada, but also in the United States and in the Palestinian territory. It was also important to establish and encourage partnerships with NGOs in developing countries, in order to make better selections and to develop the right criteria for overseas funding.

89. He pointed out that 27 per cent of Canadians had their origin in developing countries, including a fair number of Arabic-speaking Canadian Moslems and Palestinians. That fact was beginning to be reflected in the membership and funding base of Canadian NGOs interested in the region.

90. He encouraged the emerging Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian NGOs to work in a consultation process and on the development of an appropriate framework for ensuring a healthy working relationship. Canadian and North American NGOs should be supportive of both the framework and the consultation process. He stressed the importance of issues concerning women and youth for future assistance programmes.

2. "Development and the United Nations system"

(a) "Promoting human rights"

91. Ms. Janice Abu-Shakrah, Director of PHRIC, focused her presentation on how NGOs could more effectively use the United Nations system to promote human rights, both in relation to human rights violations under Israeli military occupation and in support of a State-building process that would promote and protect human rights. In particular, she made the following suggestions:

(a) To utilize the human rights treaty-monitoring bodies to expose Israel's violations of human rights by producing alternative reports or critical appraisals of Israel's reports to those bodies, e.g., the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(b) To begin to address the legacy of occupation with a view towards achieving corrective justice and restitution for the victims of human rights violations through, e.g., the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the mechanisms dealing with issues like impunity and compensation for gross human rights violations;

(c) To explore and utilize the multiple avenues for guidance and technical assistance relevant to issues of self-governance such as development and promotion of a constitutional process, election awareness, human rights training for the police and other civil servants and the development of human rights education programmes in the schools and for the general public and other areas;

(d) To utilize the Special Rapporteur and working groups of the Commission on Human Rights on a wide range of issues, not simply as depositories of reports, but as active consultants in exploring ways to direct NGO strategy and to influence policy formation.

92. She described how PHRIC and other NGOs were preparing an alternative report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, focusing on Israel's policies of forced eviction and the creation of homelessness, against Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. In her view, that use of the human rights mechanisms could also be an effective means for organizing local and international campaigns utilizing the NGO network advocating Palestinian human rights and for empowering NGOs.

(b) "Promoting development"

93. Mr. Francis Dubois, Senior Programme Officer, UNDP, said that a number of developments had taken place in the light of recent agreements, in particular the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people; the appointment by the Secretary-General of a special coordinator; and the creation of a coordination mechanism of the donor community serviced by the World Bank.

94. Present in the occupied territories since 1980, UNDP had had to readjust its work, given the new political environment. From January 1994 onwards, UNDP had decided that the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) would be its sole interlocutor and an agreement had been signed between the PLO and UNDP on 9 May 1994. UNDP had a large office in the occupied territories: with 70 staff members and a level of expenditure for 1993 of \$14 million, it was one of its largest world wide.

95. The work of UNDP in the occupied territories concentrated on: (a) strengthening the newly created PECDAR and the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics;

(b) assistance to economic development, including investment in a citrus processing plant in Gaza; (c) human resources development, in particular the building of schools and the integration of women in the economy; and (d) environment management, particularly water sanitation projects and an overall Water Resources Programme, financed by the Government of Canada. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of the role of NGOs in these endeavours.

96. Mr. William Lee, Chief of the UNRWA Liaison Office, New York, described the history and current extent of UNRWA involvement. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles, UNRWA had launched its "Peace Implementation Programme" (PIP), which had been developed in close consultation with the Palestinians and with the Agency's major donors and host countries. The main objectives of PIP were to improve the basic physical and social-services infrastructure, particularly in those areas in which UNRWA was already actively involved.

97. Describing the main projects prepared under PIP, totaling about \$120 million, he stated that UNRWA would build 9 new schools in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip and that 200 existing schools, both those run by UNRWA and those formerly run by the Israeli Civil Administration, would undergo comprehensive maintenance and upgrading.

98. In health, the PIP projects included maintenance, upgrading and reconstruction of UNRWA health clinics, as well as building a college of nursing and allied health professions, to be run in conjunction with the Gaza General Hospital which the Agency was currently building near Khan Younis. He also described a number of projects in the environment health sector, in accordance with the agency's global plan of action for the Gaza Strip as well as housing projects for refugees.

99. Mr. Lee went on to say that with the approach of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, UNRWA was consciously attempting to shift the emphasis of their social service programme from the provision of services to the facilitation of sustainable community initiatives. The Agency had developed poverty-alleviation projects aimed at integrating poorer refugees into the economy and had also launched a very successful income-generation programme for Palestinian businesses. The Agency's priorities for the near future were to strengthen the capacity of community representatives to manage such programmes themselves.

D. Plenary 4
"Looking ahead: key issues"

100. Ms. Janice Abu-Shakrah, Director of PHRIC, said that it was essential for NGOs during the interim period to formulate a programme of action. She proposed elements of a strategic platform which had emerged from her own perspective as a human rights activist based in Palestine.

101. First, issues postponed or neglected entirely in the negotiations must be made matters of top priority for the NGOs' agenda, as they represented urgent human priorities. She mentioned in particular Jerusalem, settlements, land, refugees and the Palestinians inside the Green Line.

102. Second, the task of promoting and supporting a State-building process based on respect for human rights was a responsibility to be shared by all NGOs in pursuit of the following goals: the end of occupation, the establishment of a viable, self-governing Palestinian Authority and the development of a Palestinian civil society.

103. Third, the initiative in setting priorities and formulating projects must come from Palestinian NGOs and community organizations through democratic and inclusive processes within their own communities.

104. Fourth, developing Palestinian capacity required a process of healing, rehabilitation, and restitution. Palestinians were now engaged in the monumental

task of reconciliation, while coming to terms with a reality that fell short of their aspirations and sense of elemental justice. It was essential that all those who had suffered should not be forgotten.

105. Fifth, Ms. Abu-Shakrah asserted the need to focus on the development of strategic planning, based on clearly defined goals. NGOs needed to focus on realistic but principled targets. If NGOs could accomplish some limited goals, they might be able to revive the kind of spirit and sense of purpose that marked the early successes of the intifadah. Finally, planning should incorporate strategic cooperation among Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs.

106. Ms. Sarah Kaminker, Planning consultant for neighbourhood organizations in West and East Jerusalem, said that she considered Jerusalem to be the key issue in the years to come. The Government of Israel and the municipality of Jerusalem were changing the face of East Jerusalem, so that when the negotiators reached the negotiating table, in two years, there would be very little to negotiate about. She gave an account of how Palestinian land had been used and taken for political purposes since 1967, and the negative effect of that policy on the lives of Palestinians who lived in East Jerusalem. She provided figures and a map on the amount and location of land taken, the rapid growth of Israeli settlements around the city and the constraints imposed on Palestinian families and neighbourhoods, including prohibitions on construction and lack of adequate services.

107. Discussing projections of future expropriations and settlement building within the next two or three years, she expressed the fear that the Government's policies would have the effect of building a wall that would separate Jerusalem from its Arab hinterland and further increase Palestinian homelessness.

108. The speaker charged that the basic premise of planning East Jerusalem had been to turn it into a Jewish city with a very small Arab component of isolated Arab neighbourhoods without any connection to each other.

109. The Government had stated that its planning guideline in East Jerusalem related to maintaining a demographic balance of 78 per cent Jews and 22 per cent Arabs. The continuation of that planning policy would change that balance within the next few years to 80 per cent versus 20 per cent.

110. The success of the efforts of the Israeli Government in achieving a demographic preponderance in East Jerusalem was made very clear in 1993, when the municipality was able to announce that the population of East Jerusalem alone had reached a majority of Jewish residents (160,000 Jews to 155,000 Arabs). That represented a drastic change over 27 years, since in 1967 there had been no Jews in East Jerusalem.

111. She said that that situation required political work at all levels, in particular human rights action, by bringing pressure to bear on the Israeli Government and on every Government that had something to say about the situation.

112. Mr. Naseer Aruri, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth, stressed the importance of looking ahead on certain key issues that might influence the work of NGOs, in the context of new realities and changing conditions surrounding the Palestine question.

113. In the emerging reality, the crucial issue was how to build the national authority in accordance with the restrictive modality of the Oslo accord as well as the limiting procedures of the Cairo Agreement. The issue of creating a polity was a daunting task and a tremendous challenge to the Palestinian people, with serious implications for NGOs that had been working with the grassroots organizations in the occupied territories.

114. Mr. Aruri said that the intifadah, which was perhaps the most advanced expression of nation-building in recent Palestinian history, was based on the principle that the pillar of the future State was civil society. Efforts to build the national authority needed to be consonant with the requirements of civil

society in which there was accountability, responsibility, rule of law, popular sovereignty and consent of the governed.

115. He voiced concern that some aspects of the Basic Provisional Law for the transitional period were not consonant with the democratic process, particularly in the section dealing with human rights, including political rights.

116. He said that dangers inherent in the lack of iron-clad safeguards were clear, particularly during the transition, when Palestinians would be subject to two administrations: the new Palestinian Authority and the existing occupation regime. Dissidents were likely to be exceptionally vulnerable in view of uncertain jurisdictions and accountability of the two authorities. Moreover, the envisaged distribution of power between the new self-government entities posed a number of obstacles.

117. He expressed his concern over the failure to provide for the adoption of a permanent constitution at the completion of the interim period. The interim charter was likely to be the basis for the definitive constitution. Should this happen the charter would assume a different function from the one it was expected to serve.

118. Palestinian NGOs were a vital component of the community which was engaged in the process of nation-building, which required a constitutional government. The North American NGOs were part of the broader community, which had a serious stake in the credibility and viability of the new institutions. The NGO movement had the relevant resources to promote a democratic society based on the rule of law, the consent of the governed and popular sovereignty.

119. Mr. Marc Perron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa and the Middle East Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada and Chairman of the Multilateral Working Group on Refugees, outlined how the Canadian Government viewed the new political situation and was adapting to those changing realities. He also stressed the need to look at the new scenario from an NGO perspective and suggested ideas for necessary adjustments by NGOs.

120. Although the Canadian Government was encouraged by the significant progress the peace process had made to date, a great deal more remained to be done in the occupied territories. The peace process needed to be deepened to include functions and areas that were not yet part of the autonomy arrangement. Outside the territories, the process had to be broadened to include the refugees.

121. Canada had pledged C\$55 million in assistance in support of the Declaration of Principles, and Canadian officials had met with their Palestinian counterparts to begin the process of defining priorities for this assistance. Capacity-building was identified as a major focus for Canadian support, and Canada had been the first to contribute to the Palestinian Authority.

122. However, there were more than 2 million Palestinian refugees, especially those from 1948, for whom any change in their situation had been postponed by the Declaration of Principles. It was essential for the success of the peace process that their needs be addressed. Accordingly, in close collaboration with UNRWA, the Refugee Working Group had raised more than C\$15 million for UNRWA's Peace Implementation Programme in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

123. Mr. Perron saw roles for the NGO community and requirements for adaptation, both in the area of capacity-building and support to the refugees outside the Palestinian territories. He pointed out that since the Palestinian Authority had been established, assistance funding, which in the past could only go through NGOs, could now also go directly to that Authority. The performance of the Authority would determine the pace at which the autonomy arrangement was extended. The new reality also meant that the Palestinian NGO community would have to begin developing the kind of relationship with its own government that it had developed with some other Governments around the world. A great deal of the capacity that the Palestinian Authority needed to develop was available in the NGO community. The task now was to mobilize that capacity, in order to build a civil society.

124. Mr. Perron further reminded participants that the task of attending to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, had been left to Governments, UNRWA and a few local NGOs which tended to approach the issue from a charitable perspective. There was a great deal that NGOs could be doing, outside the occupied territories, such as the extension of credit facilities, small enterprise development, programmes for women and youth and self-help housing.

IV. CLOSING STATEMENTS

125. Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of NACC, summarized the discussions during the Symposium, saying that NGOs had reaffirmed their commitment to upholding basic Palestinian rights and support for the Israelis who shared a similar commitment, and their desire to continue the constructive partnership that had evolved with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, a partnership that distinguished NACC from other NGO networks and configurations. He expressed hope that the standing committees would continue to evolve as a mechanism to put ideas into practice as well as to provide continuity and accountability between symposia.

126. Father Ibrahim Ayad, President of the Palestine Committee for NGOs, said that the Declaration of Principles contained less than the minimum of Palestinian legitimate rights. The terms of the Declaration were purposely unclear and subject to different interpretations, with the version of the stronger party being the most valid. In the American view, concessions must always be made by the Palestinians. The imposition of closures, the accelerated construction of new settlements around Jerusalem and the detention of political prisoners continued despite the Agreement. To achieve a just and lasting peace in the area, the dismantling of all settlements in the occupied territories and the return of all Palestinian refugees were prerequisites.

127. Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, emphasized that the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement were only the first step in the peace process. He said that building a Palestinian democracy would be accomplished through general elections, better basic laws and the creation of a strong civil society. It was important now to concentrate on strengthening the Palestinian Authority and extending it to the entire West Bank.

128. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the deliberations of the Symposium clearly demonstrated the importance of the United Nations and the Committee, as well as the NGO community, at that crucial point of a settlement of the Middle East conflict, the core of which was the question of Palestine. That related to mobilizing public opinion and action in support of the ongoing peace process, more vital today than ever, to monitoring developments in the region and to promoting intensified international assistance to the Palestinian people for reconstruction and nation-building.

129. A new NACC was elected for the period 1994/95 at the final session of the Symposium (see annex V).

ANNEX I

Statement of affirmation issued by the
North American Coordinating Committee
for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

1. The American and Canadian organizations participating in the Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine reaffirm our commitment to assist the Palestinian people in implementing the national and individual rights recognized by United Nations resolutions. These rights include the right to self-determination and to statehood, the rights of refugees to return or to be compensated and the rights to territory and property confiscated, seized or annexed in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We affirm as well the rights of victims of torture and maltreatment to compensation and to access to effective programmes aimed at their rehabilitation.
2. We note with alarm continuing Israeli settlement activity in occupied East Jerusalem and its environs, the continuing confiscation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank and the continuing use of torture and of other repressive measures by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory. We further note the grave and deteriorating economic situations in Gaza and the West Bank. For the sake of peace and human decency, these issues must be addressed by the international community.
3. We are hopeful that the establishment of the interim Palestinian self-governing authority in Gaza and Jericho will prove to be an historically significant step towards the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination within the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We urge the speedy replacement of the Israeli occupation by that self-governing authority to expedite a process towards a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.
4. We believe that the interim arrangements established in accordance with the Declaration of Principles require renewed commitment to moral, political and material support for the Palestinian people. We support the Palestinian people's efforts to establish civil society and democratic institutions in territory still under Israeli control. We look forward to the time the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is fully exercised, marking the end of Israeli occupation. Until that time, we recognize we must continue to provide humanitarian assistance and other means of support for the human and political rights of Palestinians. We will join with Palestinian and Israeli colleagues in efforts to end Israel's practices of torture, its establishment of illegal settlements, and its maintenance of these settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.
5. We reaffirm as well our commitment to support and work with those in Israel seeking an end to the occupation and a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict based on the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, and the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. We further affirm the partnership that has emerged between the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the organized NGO communities in North America and internationally.
6. We believe that more of our work should now focus on development which empowers Palestinians to build civil society within the occupied Palestinian territory. We also believe that we should continue to promote respect for human rights and to support the full implementation of the right to self-determination within the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. We are especially mindful of the needs of Palestinian children who comprise over 50 per cent of the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory. We are disturbed by the extent to which they have been targeted physically, educationally and emotionally. We are fully aware of the importance of addressing their social needs in order to build civil society and establish real peace in Palestine.

7. Finally, we pledge to develop and expand our networks to offer all possible assistance in helping to achieve these goals.

ANNEX II

Workshop reports

A. Workshop I: Economic development

1. The workshop opened with presentations by Mr. Jean Couturier and Mr. William Lee on the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in re-developing Palestine.
2. A wide-ranging question and answer session/discussion followed. Key themes included:
 - (a) A new working relationship needed to evolve between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the Palestinian NGOs. This should respect NGO autonomy and the PNA's role in setting national standards. Coordination was key;
 - (b) The World Bank structural adjustment approach had not worked and had no application in the occupied territories;
 - (c) It is still a transition phase. The Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) was just coming into operation now. Little of the \$2.2 billion pledged by donors had been delivered. Projects took time to bring on stream;
 - (d) The role of women and environmental projects were key areas for NGO activity in Palestine. Links between women in Palestine and in the diaspora were needed;
 - (e) Water was a key strategic issue. At the multilateral peace talks, there was a Water Working Group - which reflected the regional dimensions of the problem. Within Gaza, the problem was critical. Cooperation with Israel was key.

B. Workshop VI: The Palestinian women's experience in development

1. The workshop on "The Palestinian women's experience in development" combined with the NACC Standing Committee on Mobilizing Women discussions, recognizes the importance of the many contributions of Palestinian women living under the occupation and in the diaspora, especially their active and participatory role during the intifadah, with the realization that the Israeli occupation continues to exist. It also recognizes that the Palestinian woman's experiences in the struggle for national rights overshadowed the issues of social development and rights.
2. Reaffirming the belief in and commitment to support Palestinian women's development in social, cultural and economic sectors of her society, and human rights monitoring, the workshop and the Standing Committee:
 - (a) Express deep concern about the gender-based discrimination and victimization of women under Israeli occupation and in various sectors of Palestinian society;
 - (b) Strongly urge the full participation and representation of Palestinian women in all sectors of Palestinian society which include social, economic, cultural and political decision-making and policy confirmation;
 - (c) Strongly support the development of enhanced working partnerships between women and men in all realms of institution- and infrastructure-building and among North American and international NGOs;
 - (d) Urge all United Nations agencies and NGOs to support the protection and development of projects that enhance the improvement of Palestinian family life during the transitional period;
 - (e) Support the development of an NACC Women's Resource Directory (electronic mail database) which would include the specific areas of individual

women's expertise/specialization skills for the purpose of information sharing and strengthening the development of women's vocational/leadership abilities in all sectors of society;

(f) Urge NACC and all relevant United Nations agencies to ensure that the World Bank and other donor nations honour their pronouncements to the Palestinian people;

(g) Pledge to ensure that an equitable representation of women's social and national rights issues are included in future United Nations and NACC forums on the question of Palestine.

ANNEX III

Reports of standing committees

At the Tenth United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, held from 30 June to 2 July 1993 in New York, NACC affiliates determined more direct involvement between constituents was needed throughout the year. As a result, six standing committees focusing on different issues were created. Five of these reported to the 1994 Symposium, evaluating the past year's work and putting forward proposals for the future. Of the original six, three (Mobilizing Women; Material Aid and Economic Development; and Human Rights and International Law) will continue to operate during 1994/95. In addition, an administrative committee and a symposium committee have been added to assist the NACC Washington Office.

2. The following are summaries of the five Standing Committee reports submitted at the 1994 Symposium.

A. Mobilizing Women (Facilitator: Leila Diab)

The Standing Committee on Mobilizing Women submitted a resolution on Palestinian women's human rights and development programmes to the Symposium floor in the final assembly. The resolution included concern for gender-based discrimination against women under Israeli occupation, support for enhanced working partnerships between women and men in all aspects of NGO work, and a call for equitable representation of women's social and national issues in future United Nations and NACC forums on Palestine (see annex II B).

4. After studying a project previously initiated by the Standing Committee, a women's NGO directory, it was agreed to incorporate a women's section into the new NACC NGO Resource Directory to be released in the Fall.

5. In order better to serve the educational and development needs of Palestinian women, the Committee agreed to develop an electronic mail database on the specialization skills of women. A women's electronic-mail database could provide Palestinian women with access to the skills and services of various NGOs.

Follow-up

6. Committee Chair Leila Diab disseminated a package of information on the Committee and its proposed projects. Included was a directory of all those who participated in Committee meetings and workshops at Toronto, as well as a copy of the Committee's resolution. A sample questionnaire for NGOs interested in inclusion in the women's electronic-mail database was also created. The Committee planned to finalize the questionnaire and to disseminate it in order to gauge interest in the project.

B. Mobilizing the Religious Community (Facilitator: Victor Makari)

7. The Standing Committee on Mobilizing the Religious Community offered a resolution to the general assembly calling for a human rights monitoring programme within the occupied territories. The Standing Committee noted the religious community's moral commitment to ensuring the protection of human rights and honest and open dialogue.

8. The Standing Committee reported the good news that Rev. Alex Awad, a Palestinian who has sought re-entry into his homeland for years, had been granted a tourist visa to return and resume his pastoral responsibilities. Rev. Awad plans to work with congregations in East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Gaza and Nazareth, and will teach courses at Bethlehem Bible College. Rev. Awad is an ordained Baptist minister currently employed by the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. Both denominations are NACC affiliates. The Standing Committee plans to continue to advocate that Rev. Awad receive a permanent clergy visa.

9. The Committee formally committed its collective efforts to two important ongoing campaigns: (a) the Family Reunification Project, which helps reunite Palestinian families in Jerusalem; and (b), the Committee pledged to contact NGOs previously active in NACC networks in order to revive interest and participation in the current NGO movement for support of human rights and development in Palestine. Committee members will also seek out potential new organizations to become active NACC affiliates. While the Standing Committee will no longer formally exist in the NACC structure, members recognized the continued importance of the religious community to NGO endeavours.

C. Media (Facilitator: Nancy Murray)

10. The first issue addressed by the Standing Committee on Media was press coverage of the Symposium itself. Members of the Committee wrote several press releases and distributed them to news wires and local print and broadcast media outlets. Their efforts culminated in a broadcast of Dr. Eyad Rajab El-Sarraj's plenary presentation on the Canadian radio programme "As It Happens". The programme was later rebroadcast on National Public Radio, for a total potential listenership of between 20 million and 30 million.

11. The formal Committee report included a directory of meeting participants and four suggested plans of action for the coming months:

(a) "Living Media" creator Peter Wirth should work with NACC Coordinator Sharry Matthews to disseminate information to travel delegations to the Middle East wishing to make connections with media outlets;

(b) Committee resource person Ned Hanauer would work on an exploratory mailing asking NGOs to canvas their members to find potential members for a new media response committee;

(c) NACC affiliates should begin contacting local media with names of local experts who can be called upon to comment on Middle Eastern issues and events. More personal relationships with editors, producers, etc., should be made;

(d) Depending upon interest and assistance offered by affiliates, NACC might consider compiling a national directory of such speakers on a wide variety of topics focusing on Israel and Palestine and on the Middle East in general. Such a publication could be made available to the media.

D. Human Rights and International Law (Facilitator: Peter Lems)

12. During meetings and workshops throughout the Symposium, it was discovered that many people were unaware of the available resources and networks comprised of Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations. Committee members resolved to produce a resource paper which would enable interested parties to contact producing material both internationally and within Israel-Palestine.

13. As a follow-up, the NACC Standing Committee on Human Rights and International Law has completed its resource directory for human rights organizations. It is available through the NACC office and through Committee Chair Peter Lems.

14. Two major themes emerged as pressing human rights issues in the occupied Palestinian territories. First, Committee members outlined a one-year campaign around the status of Jerusalem. The initial step would involve the development of a platform on the ground among Palestinian and Israeli organizations. This platform would then serve as the basis for an alternative report examining Israel's compliance with the covenant of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee set a specific timeline for these first steps to be taken by November/December 1994. Once local organizations helped North American NGOs

identify important issues, international NGOs working in Jerusalem would be approached for support. Second, an international campaign would begin in January 1995, and the alternative report would be presented before the Committee in May 1995, in conjunction with Israel's own report on its compliance with the guidelines of the covenant.

15. A campaign on behalf of women and children prisoners was also suggested. The campaign would not ignore the thousands of other Palestinian political prisoners, but would highlight the fact that those vulnerable groups had been ignored in the negotiating process. Women prisoners had not been released following the signing at Cairo on 4 May 1994 of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, in accordance with the stipulations regarding prisoner release.

E. Material Aid and Economic Development
(Facilitators: Tony Wohlfarth and Taleb Salhab)

16. The Standing Committee met on Material Aid and Economic Development several times throughout the Symposium and discussed five key themes for action in 1995 that had been presented by the workshop on economic development (see annex II.A).

17. The Committee also discussed methods of fostering cooperation between affiliates of the NACC and other development-oriented NGOs currently working with coalitions such as Canada's Middle East Working Group and Interaction in the United States. Reports on the Committee's follow-up on these themes will be included in future NACC mailings.

ANNEX IV

Message to the Symposium from Mr. Yasser Arafat,
Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization

1. I am pleased to address to you the warmest greetings on behalf of the Palestinian people, my colleagues, the members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and of the Palestinian National Authority, and on my own personal behalf, and to wish your Symposium success in achieving the worthy goals to which it aspires.

2. I am also pleased to salute our dear friend, Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to thank him for the significant efforts the Committee makes to safeguard those inalienable rights and to mobilize international support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people and for its continuing efforts to secure a settlement to the Palestinian issue based on a just peace that will guarantee its freedom and national independence.

3. By promoting the peace process, the efforts of your organizations made an outstanding contribution to creating the appropriate circumstances and preparing the climate for the signing in Washington and Cairo of the Declaration of Principles and the Gaza-Jericho First Agreement by us and by the Israeli Government. Our people now look to your organizations to make yet greater efforts and to undertake yet more activities in its support as it proceeds to build its national and economic institutions and the infrastructure destroyed by long years of occupation. This is especially important because we are at a sensitive and delicate stage in which we face great challenges that require us to bring about major changes in our people's standard of living and, in particular, to create new jobs and meet the burdens of the current expenditures of the Palestinian National Authority on security and on social and economic programmes so that our people will perceive the benefits of peace and profit from its results.

4. We are certain that there is no effort that your organizations will not make in this regard. We hope that they will strive to develop their relations with Palestinian non-governmental organizations and to provide them with full support as they begin, together with the institutions of the Palestinian National authority, to lay the foundations of a Palestinian civil society that respects human rights and the freedom of thought and action of the individual and to foster the human, social and economic creative abilities of the Palestinian people in all fields.

5. I wish your Symposium every success, and I offer all of you my deep thanks with the hope that we shall meet in the land of Palestine.

ANNEX V

1994/95 North American Coordinating Committee
for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

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Palestine Aid Society of America

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Palestine Human Rights Information Center - International

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Presbyterian Church - United States of America

Victor Makari
100 Witherspoon Street, Rm. 3412
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Union of Palestinian American Women

Leila Diab
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United States of America

Union of Palestinian Women's Associations in North America

Maha Jerad
P.O. Box 29110
Chicago, IL 60629
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ANNEX VI

List of Participants and Observers

Participant NGOs

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Educational Trust
American Friends Service Committee - Middle East Peace Education Division
Canada Palestine Association
Canadian Arab Federation
Canadian Auto Workers' Social Justice Fund
Canadian Council of Churches
Canadian Palestinian Foundation
Centre d'études arabes pour le développement
Episcopal Church, United States of America
General Board of Global Ministries - United Methodist Church
General Union of Palestinian Students
International Movement for Unity Among Races and Peoples
Jewish Women's Committee against the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
Louisville Committee for Israeli/Palestinian States
Medical Aid for Palestine
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Middle East Justice Network
National Council on Canada-Arab Relations
National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America
Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation
New Jewish Agenda (Toronto)
Organisation canadienne pour la solidarité et le développement
Palestine Aid Society
Palestine Human Rights Information Center - International
Presbyterian Church, United States of America
SALAM - Group for Peace in Palestine
Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine/Israel
Union of Palestinian American Women
Union of Palestinian Women's Association in North America
United Holy Land Fund

Observer NGOs

Association of Canadian Community Colleges
B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights
in the Occupied Territories
Canada Palestine Friendship Society
Canadian Institute for Policy Research and Analysis
Canadian International Development Agency
Canadian Palestinian Federation
Carrefour des cédres
Celebration of Hope
Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec
Coalition for Peace in the Middle East
Development Resource Center
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - Lutheran Office for
Governmental Affairs
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Foundation for International Training
Gaza Community Mental Health Programme
General Union for Palestinian Women
G.W. Associates

Health Reach "Health of Children in War Zones: OPT Project"
Health Services Council
International Development and Refugee Foundation
Maryknoll Society - Justice and Peace Office
Ontario Public Service Employees Union
Palestine House
Palestine Human Rights Information Center - Jerusalem
Palestine Local Coordinating Committee
Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative
Scientific Foundation of Hisham Adeeb Hijjawi
Solidarity International for Human Rights
World Vision Canada
York Arab Student Association

Coordinating Committees

North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC)
Palestine Committee for NGOs

Panelists

Ms. Janice Abu-Shakrah, current and founding Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (PHRIC) in Jerusalem.

Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations.

Dr. Anis Al-Qaq, Member of the Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian Territories and Member of various medical and civic organizations, including the Dental Association in the West Bank (Chairman in 1985-1990), Palestinian Medical School Committee, and the Executive Committee of Higher Education Council in the Occupied Territories

Mr. Naseer Aruri, Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth

Mr. Aaron Back, staff member of B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, and editor of the B'Tselem Human Rights Report

Ms. Phyllis Bennis, radio and print journalist based at the United Nations

Mr. Norman Cook, Director of Non-Governmental Organizations, Canadian Partnership Branch of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Mr. Francis Dubois, Senior Programme Officer, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Mervyn M. Dymally, retired Congressman, United States House of Representatives

Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC) and Director of Outreach for the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Eyad Rajab El-Sarraj, Director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme

Ms. Zahira Kamal, Coordinator for Women's Affairs Technical Committee, and Project Manager of Women in Development, a programme funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- Ms. Sarah Kaminker, Planning consultant for neighbourhood organizations in West and East Jerusalem, and Co-founder of the Association of Neighborhood Self-Management and the first director of an Arab neighborhood council in A Tur
- Mr. William Lee, Chief of the Liaison Office of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in New York
- Mr. Peter Lems, Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (International)
- Mr. Johan Nordenfelt, Director of the General Assembly and Trusteeship Council Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat
- Mr. Marc Perron, Assistant Deputy Minister, Africa and Middle East Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Canada, and Chairman of the Multilateral Working Group on Refugees
- Mr. Jawad Sqalli, Chairman of the Board, Centre d'études arabes pour le développement

Workshop moderators and resource persons

Janice Abu-Shakrah
Federico Allodi
Hussein Amery
Robert Assaly
Phyllis Bennis
Aaron Back
Jean Couturier
Leila Diab
Eyad Rajab El-Sarraj
Sameh Hassan

Zahira Kamal
Sarah Kaminker
William Lee
Peter Lems
Victor Makari
Nancy Murray
Taleb Salhab
Peter Wirth
Tony Wohlfarth
Rhonda Zaharna

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

- Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, Chairman of the Committee
- Mr. Fernando Ramirez de Estenos Barciela, Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Committee
- Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhadi, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Committee
- Mr. Joseph Cassar, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, Rapporteur of the Committee
- Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Governments

China	Mr. Xiao Jiangong, Consul Consulate General of China, Toronto
Cuba	Mr. Alfredo E. Armenteros, Consul-General Consulate General of Cuba, Toronto
Ecuador	Mr. Francisco Martinez, Consul-General Consulate General of Ecuador, Toronto Ms. Isaabel de Escala, Consul-Trade Commissioner Consulate General of Ecuador, Toronto
Egypt	Mr. Ibrahim Khairat, Counsellor Embassy of Egypt, Ottawa
Greece	Mr. Christos Athanasopolous, Consul Consulate General of Greece, Toronto
India	Mr. Sujan Chinoy, First Secretary Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, New York
Indonesia	Mr. Bas Soetarto, Consul-General Consulate General of Indonesia, Toronto Mr. Sahat Sitorus, Vice-Consul/Information Consulate General of Indonesia, Toronto
Morocco	Mr. El Houcine Fardani, Counsellor Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco, Ottawa
Pakistan	Mrs. Freda Shah, Consul-General Consulate General of Pakistan, Toronto
Spain	Mr. Jose A. Zorrilla, Consul-General Consulate General of Spain, Toronto
Saudi Arabia	Mr. Abdullah A. Al Qoreli Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Ottawa
Thailand	Mrs. Cholchineepan Chiranond, Minister Royal Thai Embassy, Ottawa
Tunisia	Mrs. Sihem Seltene, Counsellor Embassy of Tunisia, Ottawa
Turkey	Mr. H. S. Oktem, Counsellor Embassy of Turkey, Ottawa

United Nations bodies

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Mr. Francis Dubois, Senior Programme Officer UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	Mr. William Lee, Chief UNRWA Liaison Office, New York

Intergovernmental organizations

Organization of the
Islamic Conference

Mr. Abd El Aziz Abu Goosh
Assistant Secretary-General for
Jerusalem and Palestine Affairs

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

Palestine

Mr. Anis Barghouthi
PLO Representative in Washington

Mr. Nour Abu Ali, Chargé d'affaires
Palestine Mission to Canada, Ottawa

Media

Canadian Arab Press (Toronto)
Canadian Jewish News
CBC (Montreal)
CBC Radio, "As It Happens"
CBC Radio Canada International
CBS-TV Evening News
CJRT-FM
Toronto, ON, Canada
CKLN 88.1 FM -
"Frequency Feminist"
Freelance journalist
Globe and Mail (Toronto)
Magic Carpet Media
(Mississauga, Ontario)
Middle Eastern Times (Toronto)

Nama Agency
Radio Canada
The Muslim Voice Newspaper

Toronto Star
Toronto Sun
TV Ontario
Vision TV (Toronto)

Wafiq Zughayer
Frances Kraft
Michel Bellemare
Andrew Male
Toufic Agha
Kerry Johnston
Earle Toppings, Programme Director
Marrie Luke

Amina Sherazee
Nadia H. Shousher
Shahrzad Faramerzi, journalist
Marcelle Gideon, Publisher-Editor;
Producer-Hostess
Basil Mustafa
Iman Aljazairi
Nawal Halawa
Lina Dib
Malik Abdul-Rehman
Rayed Abou-Hantash
Gordon Barthos, Senior Foreign Affairs Writer
Sun-Tae Han
Alex Shprintsen
Sadia Zamah