



**DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING**

and

**EUROPEAN NGO SYMPOSIUM
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine were held as a combined event under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 29 August to 1 September 1994.
2. The meeting was convened in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/158 B and was attended by the representatives of 98 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 17 of them as observers. It was also attended by 30 Governments, 8 United Nations agencies and bodies, 4 intergovernmental and other organizations, 5 non-governmental coordinating committees, a delegation from Palestine and 27 panelists and workshop leaders.
3. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation composed of H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; H.E. Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; H.E. Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and H.E. Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.
4. The programme for the meeting was formulated by the Committee in consultation with the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) and the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP) at a preparatory meeting held at Geneva on 21 and 22 February 1994. Its central theme was "Building on the Declaration of Principles towards the independent State of Palestine".
5. Six panels were held, during which 27 panelists made presentations. Also held were three workshops and two audio-visual presentations. In Panel I, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration of Principles", presentations were made by Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi, Mr. Stephen Day and Mr. Romesh Chandra.
6. In Panel II, entitled "Elements of the final settlement", presentations were made by Mr. Ibrahim Shaaban, Mr. Muhammad Hallaj and Mr. Khader Shkirat.
7. In Panel III A, entitled "The Palestinian people's reality today", presentations were made by Mrs. Maha Shawa, Mr. Marai Abderrahman and Mr. Victor Kashkoush. In Panel III B, entitled "Israeli society and the peaceful settlement with the Palestinian people", presentations were made by Mr. Peretz Kidron, Mr. Dan Leon and Mr. Nouri Abdul Razzak.
8. In Panel IV A, entitled "Social and economic development of Palestine", presentations were made by Mr. Samir Huleileh and Mr. Ahmed Saad. In Panel IV B, entitled "The role of NGOs in the social and economic development of Palestine", presentations were made by Mr. Stephen Day, Mrs. Maria Gazi, Mr. Anis Al Qaq, Mr. Bruce Stanley and Mr. Fritz Froehlich.
9. In Panel V, entitled "The role of NGOs in supporting the work of the United Nations", presentations were made by Mr. Anis Al Qaq, Mr. Larry Ekin, Mrs. Elaine Hesse Steel, Mrs. Maria Gazi and Mr. Donald Betz.
10. In Panel VI, entitled "Campaigning for Palestinian national and human rights", presentations were made by Mrs. Janice Abu Shakrah, Mr. Larry Ekin and Mr. Ilan Halevi.

11. A communiqué reflecting the sense of the deliberations was adopted at the final session (see annex I).
12. The three workshops discussed separately the issues of Palestinian health, women and education (see annex II).

II. OPENING STATEMENTS

13. The meeting was opened by **H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

14. **Mr. Ibrahima Fall**, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, read out a message on behalf of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in which he stressed the importance the United Nations attaches to the contribution of NGOs in the quest for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In his message, the Secretary-General valued the political development in the Middle East, including the historical signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, the May 1994 Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, and the Washington Declaration, signed in July 1994 by Israel and Jordan. He added that "without development, hopes for peace will soon turn to despair; without productive, meaningful employment, the young will be restless", and concluded that "economic and social development of the West Bank and Gaza is an essential basis for peace-building in the whole region".

15. A statement on behalf of **H.E. Mr. Yasser Arafat**, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, was read by his Senior Adviser on International Organizations, Mr. Zehdi L Terzi. After conveying the greetings and wishes of Chairman Arafat, Mr. Terzi stated that an independent State of Palestine "is the cornerstone for building peace in the Middle East". He argued that implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which the Declaration of Principles calls for, does not imply "excluding or rescinding all or any of the other relevant United Nations resolutions specifically of the Security Council". He said that the interim period of self-rule "is fraught with pitfalls, problems and shortcomings", and there was a need for hard work to implement the agreed principles and to establish the State of Palestine. Meanwhile, he stressed, there was a need for funds to cover recurring costs of governing the self-rule areas and for building their major infrastructures. He ended the statement with an appeal to NGOs to "pool" their resources to "prevail" upon their respective Governments and institutions to hasten and accelerate their contributions.

16. The Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, **H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé**, after welcoming participants, said that since the last meeting of that forum in 1993, the Middle East peace process had advanced by a "remarkable and historical breakthrough". The signing of the Declaration of Principles had led to a series of subsequent agreements between Israel and the PLO and to significant progress in the other tracks of the Middle East peace talks, including the Washington Agreement between Israel and Jordan. He added that many delicate questions remained to be resolved, such as the status of Jerusalem, the refugee issue, the future of Jewish settlements, and security borders. He said that the Committee had also noted with regret that the expansion of settlements around Jerusalem and the harsh measures practised by Israel against the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank had continued even after the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The Committee had also noted with satisfaction the pledges made by donor countries to the Palestinian Authority that could make possible the opening of new jobs in Jericho and in the Gaza Strip and alleviate some economic burdens in those areas. In that regard, the Committee would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to mobilize the resources of the United Nations system in support of the Palestinian people during this period of transition. Mr. Cissé stressed that the role of NGOs as grass-roots organizations had become more crucial in rebuilding the Palestinian society and expressed the Committee's determination to contribute to

that process and its readiness to continue to cooperate with NGOs in this endeavour.

17. **Mr. Stephen Day**, Chairman of ECCP, said that developments over the past year had astonished the most seasoned observers. Nevertheless, informal opinion was divided as to whether peace was in prospect. There was a mass of disturbing evidence that little had changed on the ground. United Nations resolutions and the principles of international law enshrined in fundamental accords had yet to be implemented. There could not be one set of rules for the majority of the world community while the primitive maxim that "might is right" governed relations between Israel and its neighbours. A primary purpose of the current meeting was to reassert that argument and to reaffirm support for the United Nations role. He expressed the Coordinating Committee's support for those struggling to establish the foundations of what they hoped would become the Palestinian State.

18. **Mr. Don Betz**, Chairman of ICCP, said that a lethal combination of deception and ignorance persisted in attempts to alter the focus of the work on the question of Palestine, to distract the wider public with side issues and pernicious stereotypes. By making the issues seem complex beyond comprehension and resolution, those opposing peace rooted in justice tried to take the world's eyes off the "prize". The struggle had always been about self-determination, about ending an unconscionable, generation-long, illegal and immoral occupation. The saga was about the recognition of the inherent right of a people to govern themselves. It was about statehood and the creation of the critical circumstances crucial to the vitality of such a State.

19. The tasks of NGOs did not cease with the initialling of the Declaration of Principles. The longstanding United Nations commitment to cooperation with NGOs on the issues facing Palestinians should be applauded. He said that they should strengthen such collaboration as both groups devised alternative ways of contributing effectively to the objectives outlined in relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine spanning the past 40 years.

III. PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Panel I Implementation of the Declaration of Principles

20. **Mr. Zehdi L Terzi**, Senior Adviser on International Organizations to Mr. Yasser Arafat, said that since last year's meeting, a new approach was being concluded, including the signing in September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles. Although the agreement had not heralded many improved prospects for the Palestinian people in the immediate or foreseeable future, it nevertheless provided momentum for the peace process. Israel's disregard over the years for the content and implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions was paralleled by its current failure to carry out its obligations as outlined in the Declaration. Self-determination was an internationally recognized right that was applicable to the Palestinian people. That has been opposed by Israel with the constant support of the United States. However, a new approach by then President George Bush had opened the way in March 1991 for negotiations based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principles giving Israel security and recognition while providing for legitimate political rights for the Palestinians. Months of negotiations had proved fruitless and Israel had persistently evaded any discussion of resolution 242 (1967), which called for the withdrawal of its military forces from the Arab and Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. Meanwhile, another channel of negotiations, sponsored by the Government of Norway, had taken place. The Declaration of Principles, which was signed based on those negotiations, provided a mandatory "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces".

21. In analysing the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement, he said that Israel's foremost concerns regarding the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area were "security" and "public order", which faced a problem in financing. Funding was also a problem in key administrative services, as well as in development and reconstruction projects.

22. Mr. Terzi concluded that crucial items had been postponed in the Declaration of Principles, including the matter of the displaced Palestinians, the settlements and Jerusalem. The future status of Jerusalem was the key to peace in the Middle East. He expressed concern over Israel's attempts to strengthen its control over the city, declaring that any part of the occupied Palestinian territory as "liberated" was premature at that stage. Pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations, the land remained occupied territory and Israel remained the occupying Power, with all that that implied, under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

23. Mr. Stephen Day, Chairman of ECCP, stated that the apparent inability of Europe to play a political role commensurate with its historical, geographical and economic weight, practically leaving the field to the United States, deeply disappointed Arab observers. The essential European reaction to the announcement of an agreement between the PLO and Israel was one of surprise. The news was a major blow to European pride.

24. The European countries were well aware that human rights, economic development and the peace effort in the region overlapped closely. European statements since the signing of the Declaration had been responsible to a certain extent for encouraging public opinion to believe that peace had already been achieved. The corollary to that was that the situation in the field had been ignored and outstanding problems continued. There was a risk of severe disillusionment setting in, particularly among the Arabs, for whom life had not changed for the better.

25. It was very difficult to escape the conclusion that Europe had used the Declaration of Principles to withdraw even further from its historic responsibilities. The European Commission acknowledged the vital role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and NGOs in the region. The daily reports of violence against Palestinian civilians and suppression of democratic activity made depressing reading. The current meeting had to discuss how best to support NGOs in their vital work in support of human rights and to raise public awareness of the facts. The work of those concerned to see justice in Palestine had never been more difficult nor more important. There was a chance for a just settlement, but it would take many years of effort and they were now only on the starting line.

26. Mr. Romesh Chandra, Honorary President of the World Peace Council, said work had to continue until the establishment of an independent State of Palestine. The Palestinian people rejoiced when they saw the PLO flag flying over some parts of the occupied territories. But they could not rejoice fully because not all the territories had been liberated, not all the Palestinian prisoners had been released, the killings and repression continued, the settlements remained and the exiles had not yet come home. Peace and development were directly linked in the building of the Palestinian State.

27. He emphasized the important role played by the United States and many of its partners in encouraging Israel to continue its violation of the rights of the Palestinian people. Among other things, he expressed concern that the present United States Administration might seek to have some of the key United Nations resolutions on the issue rescinded. It was vital for all concerned, especially NGOs, to strengthen and continue their efforts to fulfil their pledges to the Palestinian people.

Panel II Elements of the final settlement

Jerusalem

28. Mr. Ibrahim Shaaban, Director of the Palestinian Housing Council, spoke on proposals regarding the status of Jerusalem. Proposals for the internationalization of Jerusalem had failed because they had avoided the problem, which none the less remained. Another proposal called for accepting the existing situation, but with two different sections of the city run independently. That meant rewarding aggression as a means to acquire territory. Yet another suggestion had been the creation of two States with two capitals in an open city. That took into account

the aspirations of both parties, but it ignored the many changes in the eastern part of the city. In 1967, some 66,000 Palestinians had lived in East Jerusalem. Nowadays, 150,000 Palestinians and 155,000 Israelis lived in the same area, which meant that the newcomers outnumbered the Palestinians in the eastern part.

29. In 1971, the Security Council had stated very clearly that Israeli actions to change the status of the city were invalid. One should ask the question of whether might was right: was it by creating facts on the ground that one made law? Any solution to the overall conflict should take into consideration justice and equity. The proposal to separate the city completely, as it was before 1967, was not acceptable to the international community. It should be recalled that Jordan had no sovereignty over East Jerusalem. In accordance with international law, sovereignty over Jerusalem rested with the Palestinian people, not with the occupying Power. Regarding the creation of a separate arrangement for holy places, as mentioned in the Washington Declaration and which assumed divine sovereignty, that meant that somebody represented God on Earth; that was very difficult to accept, especially in the twentieth century. The solution to the conflict had to take into account the solution to the problem of Jerusalem.

Refugees

30. Mr. Muhammad Hallaj, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine, speaking in his personal capacity, said that, although efforts to resolve the Arab-Jewish conflict had come a long way, the struggle was not yet over. It was even premature to say that the peace process had reached the point of no return. The small successes achieved so far in the Palestinian-Israeli track were due in no small measure to the fact that talks had not yet begun on the issues that fuelled the conflict. Among them, the future of Palestinian refugees loomed large. In fact, it was possible to say that the refugee question was the most fundamental and difficult of the remaining issues. For the Israelis, how the refugee question was ultimately settled impinged on the Zionist notion of Israel as the State of the Jews.

31. For the Palestinians, it touched their vital concept of "peoplehood", in addition to security needs and the well-being of the Palestinians living in the diaspora. The resolution of the refugee issue defined their national identity and determined their social coherence and the integrity of the family unit. The world community had understood and recognized the essential facts about the Palestinian refugee problem, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which recognized the right of return as the cornerstone of any solution. What was needed was a way to implement an agreed but long-ignored solution. It was unfortunate that, in some quarters, it had become respectable to argue that that which was unacceptable to Israel was impractical. But if the right of return was impractical, because of Israeli intransigence, alternative solutions were impractical for even more compelling reasons. For example, resettlement violated not only the inherent right of displaced persons to repatriation, but it tore apart Palestinian society and perpetuated its fragmentation. Furthermore, resettlement violated the will of the host countries whose economic capacity did not permit the permanent absorption of large communities of non-citizens. To abandon United Nations resolutions simply because Israel did not like them also set a dangerous precedent. The most dangerous threat to the eventual success of the peace process was the myopic Israeli perception of Palestinian rights as residual – that they were limited to what Israel could afford after it met its own needs.

Settlements

32. Mr. Khader Shkirat, Director of the Land and Water Establishment of the West Bank, said that one of the most significant Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory had been to encourage Israelis to settle in and expand settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, to attain a demographic majority in order to maintain control of the region. He added that the building of settlements had not stopped during or since the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The only thing that had changed in Israeli policy since the coming to power of the Labour

Party was that now more intelligent methods were being used. That was particularly true in Arab Jerusalem. The Israeli settlement drive in the occupied territories had been implemented through a policy of creating facts and making radical changes in the physical character of the city, with postponement of the subject of settlements to the final stage of negotiations.

33. The Hebron massacre was a clear example of that policy, since as a result the city was divided, and restrictions had been imposed on the freedom of its Arab inhabitants. The speed with which settlements were being built was going to transform Jerusalem into a Jewish city. At that rate, in one year there would be nothing to negotiate. The Palestinian leadership should obtain a freeze on the building of settlements.

Panel III A The Palestinian people's reality today

34. Mrs. Maha Shawa, economist and Head of the International Cooperation Division of the Health Department of the Palestinian Authority, described the real life situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory, focusing especially on the Gaza Strip. The population in both areas was approaching 2 million, which represented, particularly in Gaza, a "population bomb" marked by very high density. That state of affairs had been worsened by the establishment of settlements, where 4,000 settlers lived on 40 per cent of the total area of the Gaza Strip, while more than 800,000 Palestinians lived on the remaining 60 per cent.

35. Mrs. Shawa stressed that the infrastructure in the territories had been either damaged or had not existed in the first place. For example, there was no adequate sewage system – drinking water had a high salinity component; there was no urban planning – the environment was threatened by pollution; roads were in a miserable state; electricity and telephone lines were connected to those of Israel's.

36. The territories' industrial base was very small and unable to absorb the growing demand for jobs. The opening of the economy was important for the territories to flourish. Unemployment was estimated at 40 per cent in general and much higher in Gaza.

37. A number of practices of the Israeli authorities also had a negative influence on Palestinian life in the territories. Those included the issue of the Palestinian prisoners, the permit system that divided the occupied territories into sealed zones and seriously hampered freedom of movement, and the demolition or sealing of houses. The situation in the new autonomous regions had hardly changed, but the people were happy because for the first time they had their own police force, flag and schools and they could even go to the beach. Those were but the first steps and the situation was critical. The Palestinians would spare no effort to attain peace based on justice and the attainment of all their rights.

38. Mr. Victor M. Kashkoush, Director-General of the Welfare Association, spoke about the situation of the Palestinian people in the diaspora and the role they could play in building the Palestinian State. Palestinians in the diaspora outnumbered those in Palestine two to one. Their achievements were quite remarkable in several fields, including science, education and banking, to name a few, and their experience would be most valuable in the development of a Palestinian State. Extensive transfer of capital and technology and the reverse "brain-drain" were already taking place. Diaspora Palestinians would constitute the bridge between a Palestinian State and the other Arab countries.

39. Certain prerequisites were necessary, including the key ingredients of good government. However, Palestinians in the diaspora did not need to wait until everything needed was in place to start contributing to the growth of the economy: multimillion dollar undertakings were under way. He also described the activities of the Welfare Association on behalf of Palestinians, both within the territories and in Israel. The Palestinians of the diaspora would continue to be valuable players in the transition, reconstruction and development of the Palestinian nation.

40. **Mr. Marai Abderrahman**, Secretary-General of the Palestine Committee for NGOs, said a most important prerequisite was to reach a unified, coherent understanding of the accords. Fifty years of struggle, of wars and interventions had taught the Palestinians much. It had prompted them to adopt an attitude of political realism. They had to confront the reality regarding the struggle of the Jews to create a Jewish State in the region. However, re-examination of that concept did not constitute acceptance or rejection of that undertaking. It had to be seen as a reality. Without re-examining that question, the idea of political realism and the thinking of Palestinians on certain concepts would remain tactical. It was necessary to examine "the Jewish question". The agreement was only the beginning of a long and arduous path. Life imposed on all the people in the region the need to respect each other and all their rights and interests. He stressed the importance of the role played by the peace-loving forces in Israel.

Panel III B Israeli society and the peaceful settlement with the Palestinian people

41. **Mr. Peretz Kidron**, Israeli freelance journalist and writer, recalled that Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat had shaken hands and the sky had not caved in; history had taken a step forward and there had been no calamity. True, peaceful coexistence was a long way off: the distance was even greater to get to genuine good-neighbourly relations. But in the most immediately crucial area -- the way ordinary people perceived the facts of life -- the decisive breakthrough was behind them. Peace in the short term was the cessation of bloodshed, and that blessing called for no apology. However, without genuine democracy, it would be a sham of peace.

42. In order for both peoples to channel their national energies to solving domestic problems, they must lay their conflict firmly to rest, not merely suspend it. Acts of States were not enough. Israel's acceptance of Palestinian national rights was a major step, so was mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. Above all, an end to the occupation that had crushed the Palestinian people and sapped the Israeli occupiers of their moral and spiritual essence had to be realized.

43. However, beyond the required political and diplomatic steps, the two peoples had to follow the path to the "historic reconciliation" promised in the Oslo accords. Paradoxically, the path to genuine peace had to pass through a phase of separation. Close everyday contact made it virtually impossible to avoid stepping on each other's toes. "Our first step towards becoming good neighbours must be to erect good fences," he concluded.

44. **Mr. Dan Leon**, Managing Editor of the Palestine Israel Journal, recalled that, more than 60 years ago, when there were only some 80,000 Jews and 660,000 Arabs in Palestine, the great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber had given his blessing to what he called the determination of the Jewish people to return to its homeland. At the same time, he had expressed his belief in "a solidarity of real interests between us and the Arab working people", so that they would come to respect each other and seek each other's good. The 1948 war had destroyed the existence of the Palestinian people in its homeland and 600,000 Palestinians were transformed overnight into refugees. Only with the Oslo Declaration of Principles did it look at long last as if there was a prospect of a new era opening. "Peace Now" was by far the most important Israeli peace group because it was the largest and most influential, and it had always been a broad consensus-oriented movement.

45. For the future, the peace movement would have to find the most telling way of taking a stand on at least three issues of principle in which there might not necessarily be consensus within the Rabin Government. The first issue was the future of the settlements, which were established as an obstacle to possible peace and would continue to fulfil that role as long as they existed. The second was the complex issue of Jerusalem, where the Israelis had to recognize that an undivided Jerusalem could also serve as the Palestinian capital. The third was Israeli recognition that the Palestinians themselves would decide on the form of their self-determination and nobody could deny the Palestinians their right to statehood alongside Israel. The only viable solution to the conflict was the creation of a sovereign Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and living in peace with its neighbours.

46. Mr. Nouri Abdul Razzak, Secretary-General of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, focused on a number of the controversies that arose in Arab societies in the Middle East in connection with the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The agreements evoked strong repercussions, ranging from support to criticism and condemnation. It might be said that the Arab circles that supported the agreements had received them with reserved welcome. Although that development had been a breakthrough in the apparently stalemated Middle East peace talks, what it actually had achieved was extremely limited as to the Palestinian people's great expectations and enormous sacrifices, and the Arab people's hopes and sufferings in confronting Zionism.

47. Some believed, none the less, that the Palestinian national movement had made some gains. Among other things, it was the first time the Palestinian people had a Palestinian political authority on its own soil. A more optimistic view maintained that the agreements had aborted the "Greater Israel" plan. In general, the agreements were received with a warm welcome and a popular note of hope in the occupied Palestinian land. The worldwide welcome and the pledges made by several international bodies to fund development and economic recovery in the land under Palestinian authority gave hope of an end to the long suffering.

Panel IV A Social and economic development of Palestine

48. Mr. Samir Huleileh, member of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), said that there were currently two categories of priorities for the Palestinians: the maintenance of cohesion among the Palestinian people and the operational or tangible tasks to be performed. Maintaining cohesion meant that measures had to be carried out regarding the democratic context for Palestine. It also meant restarting the dialogue between the authorities and the opposition and starting a dialogue on elections. Among the problems faced was a lack of professional skills; the reintegration of political prisoners; and the need to preserve unity between returning Palestinians and those who had stayed in Palestine. The increase in the unemployment rate, which has climbed to as high as 40 per cent, was another major problem.

49. As for the building of the Palestinian economy, he said, there were still many questions and unresolved issues. A total of \$600 million was expected for the funding of projects for 1994 which had not materialized. There were also a number of strategic projects not being financed by international aid and the flow of resources was facing problems. There were also problems in building Palestinian machinery for handling funds from donor countries. Moreover, there were political reasons for holding back funds -- some countries wanted to use the funds they had pledged to exert pressure on the Palestinian Authority to speed up the peace process in their desired direction.

50. Even when the internationally funded projects were eventually realized, they would not alone solve the unemployment problem. The Palestinian authorities had placed their hopes on private investments, whether from the diaspora or from international investors, to remedy the unemployment problem and had completed the first draft of a law to facilitate private investments. They required increasing cooperation from the United Nations and NGOs. The relationship between the Palestinian Authority and NGOs had yet to be regularized and defined.

51. Mr. Ahmed Saad, an Israeli-Palestinian economist, said that the success of the Declaration of Principles hinged on two factors: the extent of Israel's commitment to implement the agreements reached within a comprehensive context that included the relevant United Nations resolutions and the creation of conditions and factors necessary to confront the frightening deterioration in the economic and social situation in the occupied territories and to enable the Palestinian Authority to lead, manage and build up their economy.

52. During the occupation, Israel had pursued an economic policy of "incorporation without development". Perhaps the most salient indicators of subservient status were those showing the exploitation of cheap Palestinian labour: the average wage of Palestinian workers was 24 to 28 per cent of that of workers in Israel. Because of Israel's policy of economic sabotage and mechanisms for bringing pressure to bear on the Palestinians, the chief problems in the occupied areas were the growth of widespread unemployment and the deterioration of the living standards of the population. At the beginning of the year, unemployment stood at 29 per cent of the total Palestinian workforce, and in the Gaza Strip it exceeded 40 per cent. That lack of employment would face additional critical needs when thousands of displaced Palestinians returned to the self-rule areas in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration of Principles.

53. Mr. Saad added that the economy of the territories had worsened because of Israel's control of more than 60 per cent of the land in the West Bank and much of its water resources. To confront the challenges successfully in the transitional stage and to build foundations of stability and peace for the Palestinian State in the making and in the region, enormous resources were needed. The Palestinian economy was in pressing need of \$16 billion, including \$3 billion for the building of an infrastructure alone. Pressure should be maintained on the Governments of industrialized countries and Arab oil countries to meet their obligations and not to be slow in providing assistance.

Panel IV B The role of NGOs in the social and economic development of Palestine

54. **Mr. Stephen Day**, Chairman of ECCP, emphasized that self-determination is a right to be exercised by the people themselves and to be respected by the international community. Accordingly, international NGOs should let the Palestinians "make the running". For too long, well-intentioned outsiders had told the Palestinians how to resolve their tragic situation. The achievements of the Palestinian people over the past year had been remarkable considered against the background of continued physical dispersion and daily harassment and oppression within Palestine. For the future, there was the need to transfer the responsibilities to the national authorities and the rationalization of the extensive NGO structure that developed under Israeli occupation and provided vital services in all sectors of communal life. International NGOs should, against these new realities, be able to provide assistance in various fields including the regular flow of reliable information; training of cadres in every economic sector; helping in encouraging investments in building the economy and the infrastructure; and providing partnerships in the various sectors of communal life.

55. **Mr. Anis Al Qaq**, Chairman of the Health Services Council in the West Bank, emphasized the continuing relevance of NGOs in the Palestinian context. The role of NGOs during the previous period had been most effective and remarkable. They now had a most important part to play as pressure groups and to help in outlining development priorities. They could work to develop agriculture, protect the environment, promote the rights of women and fight against the closure of Jerusalem and other cities, among other activities.

56. **Mr. Fritz Froehlich**, of the Austro-Arab Friendship Society, briefed participants on the regional meetings in the occupied Palestinian territories sponsored by the Geneva Conference Working Group in May 1994. The object of meetings held in Gaza, Nablus, Hebron and Jerusalem had been to air views regarding the role of NGOs in the territories in the coming period and regarding issues of general concern to NGOs working there.

57. Among the general themes that had emerged at the meetings were: the continuing importance of NGOs during the coming period in services, development and civil society and in resisting the occupation and its restrictions; the need for a constructive and complementary relationship between NGOs and the Palestinian Authority and a corresponding freedom of activity for NGOs; and the need for financial accountability and democracy within NGOs. The recommendations of these meetings showed a serious effort by NGOs to become more professional in support of Palestine.

58. Mr. Bruce Stanley, member of the Association of International Development Agencies, said that the environment within which Palestinian NGOs operated had experienced many changes in the last two years. Four such changes were of particular significance: the introduction of the Palestinian Authority; the shift in the general availability of resources; the postponement of negotiations over fundamental issues of the occupation; and the rising tide of public demand for accountability and transparency. Regarding the first, NGOs and Governments were in a conflictive relationship when assessing the needs of society. In civil society, the distinction must be made between debate over government policy, procedures and institutional forms on the one hand, and the overall legitimacy of the Government on the other. The criticism of government policy must be distinguished from rejection of the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority.

Panel V The role of NGOs in supporting the work of the United Nations

59. Mrs. Ealna Hassa Stael, Director of the World Young Women's Christian Association (Geneva), said that in maintaining and strengthening the campaign in solidarity with the Palestinians, NGOs must use the statements and publications of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the General Assembly, combined with the authentic voice of the Palestinian people. NGOs must be aware of the attempts for the withdrawal of all United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine. Thus it was exceedingly important for the NGO campaigns to remind and re-educate the populace as to the substance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

60. NGOs could play an important role in assisting the United Nations in monitoring so that the Declaration of Principles and further steps do lead to the implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and that Israel did not make unreasonable demands within the terms of the Declaration of Principles.

61. Other areas in which NGOs could support the work of the United Nations and the Palestinian people were: providing training for community leaders in consensus-building and the development of society; assisting the Palestinian Authority, in an advisory role, in the development of civil society and democratic institutions; the identification and recruitment of complementary NGOs with specific skills in social and economic development; identifying and securing financial resources for Palestinian development; and identifying existing programmes and examples throughout the world of effective, low-cost, people-centred development projects that could be considered for possible application in the Palestinian context.

62. Mr. Anis Al Qaq said that Palestinians had come to regard the United Nations with a certain suspicion and even cynicism as a result of many let-downs. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent Cairo Agreement, the political role of the United Nations on the question of Palestine had been further marginalized. Direct bilateral negotiations had taken precedence over the multilateral track. However, the Declaration of Principles had provided the United Nations with the short-term political framework within which to operate. Moreover, in the final analysis, the ultimate goal of the recognition of the right to self-determination of Palestinians through the establishment of a State, with Jerusalem as its capital, was a prime issue for United Nations advocacy.

63. Similarly, he continued, NGOs had a vital role to play in the advocacy of the issue of Jerusalem and the protection of the human rights of the Palestinians. Through their presence on the ground, those organizations had the advantage of being able to move where the United Nations could not. Political statements could thus be transformed into reality. In the social and economic fields, extensive networks had been developed by the United Nations agencies and the NGO community in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to fill the governmental void left by the occupation. Although in the current situation new forms of cooperation had to be found, the tremendous

experience acquired by the NGO community could be utilized to strengthen the impact of United Nations development activities at the local level.

64. **Mrs. Maria Gazi**, member of the Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity, expressed the hope that the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and of the Cairo Agreement would lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Meanwhile, Palestine was still an occupied territory and the sufferings of the Palestinian people were not over yet.

65. She reviewed the work of the United Nations and of NGOs on the Palestinian question, and praised the role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights in that regard. Yet, despite their contributions, the United Nations and the Committee had been excluded from the ongoing negotiations. The question that needed to be asked now was whether there was a role for the United Nations, or more particularly, for the Committee, and for NGOs in the light of the developments in the area and the recent agreements. The answer was a definite "yes". If today Israel unconditionally freed all the Palestinian prisoners; allowed all Palestinians to return to their homeland; withdrew from all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem; and if the Palestinian people were free to establish its own independent State, the United Nations and NGOs would have accomplished their goals. But until that time came, NGOs must remain bound by their commitment to provide all possible help and assistance.

66. NGOs should also campaign for the active involvement of the United Nations in the ongoing negotiations as the major guarantor of the rights of the Palestinian people, she added.

67. **Mr. Don Betz**, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, said that the coordination of NGO activities with the United Nations had begun in 1983 when the United Nations had convened the International Conference on the Question of Palestine. A key to the burgeoning United Nations-NGO relationship was the high degree of mutual understanding and cooperation. The Palestinians had influenced both the United Nations and NGOs themselves, particularly through the *intifadah*, the Palestinian NGOs and the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

68. The United Nations-NGO network must acknowledge and embrace their mutual responsibilities. Coordination of the network was needed now more than ever. Most NGOs would concur with the conclusion that the United Nations should take greater advantage of their experience and expertise on the wide variety of issues associated with the question. The NGOs wanted to work with the United Nations. After 12 years of a fruitful marriage, it was not the time for a divorce, but rather the opportunity to reassess candidly the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship in the light of clearly defined objectives.

Panel VI Campaigning for Palestinian national and human rights

69. **Mr. Larry Ekin**, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, said that the North American NGO leadership had through recent meetings and discussions reaffirmed its commitment to continue working to support the implementation of the full rights of the Palestinian people. Many people believed that everything was on the way to being settled. It fell upon the shoulders of the NGOs to convey the burdensome message that the occupation was not yet over. North American NGOs had also affirmed that they must continue their human rights activities, and that those remained a central tenet of their collective work. They would continue to monitor Israel's activities and violations. However, constituent organizations had firmly concluded that they must use the same standards in judging the performance of the Palestinian Authority as they employed in judging Israel's. The organizations had also agreed that development-related activities must occupy a more important portion of their work. A dialogue had already been initiated for discussion with development-oriented NGOs which now appeared eager to become engaged in the Palestinian question.

70. He outlined the elements that made for a successful campaign for Palestinian rights, including defining a concrete goal, identifying the right people for action, and seeking support among Israelis and Palestinians. He proposed to participants a sustained cooperative campaign focusing on the issue of Jerusalem, without neglecting other issues. That should be a multitiered campaign with a variety of actions for diverse constituencies. It involved the preparation of materials and the focusing of energy.

71. Mrs. Janice Abu Shakrah, Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Center in Jerusalem, said the time was ripe for a campaign on Jerusalem. There were four basic reasons why many campaigns had failed: overpoliticization of the issues, which made it more likely that groups would lose allies; the initiation of campaigns from the outside without garnering broad grass-roots support; working from the top down; and an excessive focus on needs rather than demanding legitimate rights. NGOs should focus their work on issues postponed or that had not been covered by the Declaration of Principles such as family unification, prisoners, settlements, etc. She pointed to the campaign focusing on the right to adequate housing for Palestinians in Jerusalem, which the Habitat International Coalition had initiated, as particularly effective.

72. Mr. Ilan Halevi, Special Adviser to Mr. Yasser Arafat, said that, while the PLO leadership and Israeli right-wing opponents of the Declaration of Principles were both of the view that it would lead, almost inevitably, to an independent Palestinian State, Israeli government officials, some Palestinian opposition circles and even some friends of the Palestinians, had contended just the opposite.

73. The Oslo, Cairo and all other agreements signed on the way to Palestinian sovereignty and statehood must be understood as moments in a transition, and not be projected as static models of a less-than-legal solution. By agreeing, in the Declaration, to postpone to permanent-status negotiations, the discussion of the core issues of the conflict, the Palestinian side had in no way forfeited any of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians. While the letter of invitation to the Madrid conference stated that "final status negotiations shall commence at the beginning of the third year of the interim period", the Declaration stipulated that those negotiations should start as soon as possible, but no later than two years after the interim agreement came into effect. Israeli leaders, however, continued to claim that there was an agreement not to discuss those issues before two years.

74. NGOs should seize that element as the most important one in the Declaration and "wage a relentless campaign for the immediate opening of permanent-status negotiations" within the framework of the implementation of the Declaration.

75. Regarding the refugees, there was an artificial distinction between those who had left in 1948 and those who had left in 1967, the latter being referred to as "displaced persons". But displaced persons were refugees too. Palestinian refugees, as all refugees, had a natural right of return to their homeland, a right embodied in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967). A campaign for their return must confront the half-century old Zionist axiom that the return threatened the very existence and character of the Israeli State. The existence of a sizeable Palestinian minority within the "Green Line" itself made Israel a binational State anyway. With respect to Jerusalem, it must be clear that none of the proposals put forward was an alternative to the rescinding of annexation and to the end of occupation in East Jerusalem.

IV. CLOSING STATEMENTS

76. **Mr. Stephen Day** said that there had been a major change in the Middle East political landscape that for years had been all too familiar. There was a possibility of an end to the conflict that had scarred the twentieth century. He stressed the theme of the meeting, "Building on the Declaration of Principles towards the independent State of Palestine", and hoped that people left the meeting with practical conclusions as to how each could assist that process.

77. **Mr. Don Betz** said he was confident of the evolution of the relationship between the United Nations and NGOs working for Palestine. He also expressed optimism about the future of the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

78. **The Rev. Ibrahim Ayad**, President of the Palestine Committee for NGOs, said that the Declaration of Principles was still subject to negotiations and divergent interpretations. The way it was construed, the version of the stronger was the most valid. Furthermore, the promises of aid made to the Palestinians by the World Bank and the international community following the signing of the Declaration had not been fulfilled. To achieve a just and lasting peace and stability in the area, resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) should be fully implemented; all Palestinian refugees should return, according to basic human rights and General Assembly resolution 194 (III); all detainees should be released; and settlements should be closed.

79. **H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé** said that the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was pleased with the opportunity it had had for a frank and constructive exchange of views with the chairmen and other representatives of the coordinating committees concerning the objectives and modalities of common action in the future. The intensive deliberations of the past four days had illustrated once again the attachment of the NGO community to attaining a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, founded on internationally recognized principles and United Nations resolutions on the exercise of the rights of the Palestinians.

80. Furthermore, the presentations made by the experts from the occupied Palestinian territories had highlighted once again the essential need to bring about a rapid improvement in the Palestinian economy and living conditions and to achieve normalization of all aspects of Palestinian life. In that regard, measures by the occupying Power were urgently called for to release all detainees, cease land confiscation and settlements and restore full respect for human rights.

81. He stressed that NGOs had also reflected their authentic desire to contribute to the building of Palestinian civil society and infrastructure during the transitional period, in cooperation with Palestinian leaders. Statements made at the meeting had pointed to the need to improve the Palestinian economy rapidly, to create jobs and to normalize all aspects of daily life in order to create an atmosphere favourable to quick progress in negotiations towards a final settlement. In that connection, it was urgent for the occupying Power to take all measures to release all detainees, renounce the confiscation of land and the building of settlements, and re-establish full respect for human rights.

Annex I

Communiqué adopted by the Eleventh United Nations International NGO Meeting and Eighth European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine

1. We, the non-governmental organizations gathered at the Eleventh United Nations International NGO Meeting and Eighth European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, held from 29 August to 1 September 1994, are aware that we are convened at a crucial moment in the history of the Palestinian people.
2. The Declaration of Principles was a turning-point opening a new chapter in Middle East relations and an avenue to a just and lasting peace. We have witnessed the Madrid conference, the mutual recognition of the two parties, the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement of May 1994 and the subsequent transfer of limited areas of power and responsibility.
3. The unequivocal support by the NGOs for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of the independent Palestinian State in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions remains at the centre of the NGO commitment. Further, we consider that the United Nations continues to have a role in reaching a negotiated settlement on the question of Palestine and is the most appropriate body that can guarantee a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.
4. The information presented at this meeting and the discussions that followed confirmed that this peace process is in its initial stages. The implementation of the initial stages of Palestinian interim self-government is an important achievement but must not be permitted to obscure the reality that, during the transitional period, Israel, as the occupying Power, remains obligated to observe the Geneva Conventions until such time that the Palestinian people achieve full sovereignty.
5. Although resolution of the questions related to Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and the right of return have been deferred to the permanent status negotiations, their importance demands a clear and constant affirmation from the NGO movement. Of immediate and major concern to us is the continued Israeli imprisonment of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees. We call for their unconditional release in compliance with the Cairo Agreement of 4 May 1994.
6. We request that countries hosting Palestinian refugees preserve their civil, social and political rights until they are allowed to return to their homes.
7. We express our appreciation for the series of regional meetings held in the occupied Palestinian territories in preparation for our meeting, organized by the Geneva Conference Working Group and attended by local and international NGOs in Palestine. These meetings are an indication of the seriousness and importance that NGOs accord to their collective work in cooperation with the United Nations. We welcome the reports from these meetings and anticipate that these efforts will continue. We attach their recommendations and refer them to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the NGO network for their support and implementation.
8. Under occupation, local and international NGOs have played crucial roles in the development of the Palestinian economy and society. We anticipate that NGOs will continue to play these roles, and that support should be provided based upon their competence and quality of service. We will seek ways to increase the

involvement of NGOs, including those involved in economic and social development and in humanitarian service. We look forward to and encourage the cooperation between NGOs and the Palestinian National Authority.

9. We warmly thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for convening this international meeting and the work done by the Division for Palestinian Rights and the conference staff in facilitating our sessions. We genuinely appreciate the messages of support from Chairman Yasser Arafat and Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as presented by their representatives. We further appreciate the statements supporting the NGO movement and activities made by H.E. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé and Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa. We reaffirm our interest in continuing and expanding NGO cooperation with the Committee and the Division. We request the assistance of the Committee and the Division in accessing other United Nations bodies and agencies and in identifying United Nations programmes and resources that can help NGOs to fulfil their objectives.

10. We request the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to convey this communiqué to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session as part of the Committee's report.

Annex II

Workshop reports

WORKSHOP I HEALTH

Resource persons: Ruchama Marton
Umayyeh Khammash

Chairman/Rapporteur: David Weaver

1. The workshop on health heard presentations from Dr. Ruchama Marton of the Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights and Dr. Umayyeh Khammash of the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees on the current state of the Palestinian health services system. Both speakers placed the situation in the historical context of 27 years of Israeli military occupation that had led to an underdeveloped, irregular and distorted system dependent upon Israel for crucial specialties, technology and basic medical supplies. That dependency had also made Palestinians in need of medical care highly vulnerable to the actions of the Israeli authorities, for example, the imposition of travel restrictions, closures and the requirement of various permits. Those conditions continued to prevail over the many Palestinians still under direct Israeli military occupation.
2. Dr. Marton, in her statement, focused on the dependency of the Palestinian health system on Israel that the occupation had created and on the vast disparity between the investment in health services by the Israeli Government in Israel and in the occupied territories. Israel had an obligation to assist the Palestinians under international law, both as an occupying Power under the Geneva Conventions and as a signatory of international health conventions. Accordingly, the Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights had issued an 11-point proposal covering the 2 central areas of Israeli responsibility: (a) immediate cooperation for the welfare of individual patients; and (b) cooperation for the development of an independent Palestinian medical infrastructure. In her concluding remarks, she stated that, regrettably, the political leadership was not giving adequate, in-depth consideration to important health issues.
3. In his remarks, Dr. Khamash focused on the historic and current role of Palestinian NGOs in the delivery of health services and on the issues posed by the emergency of the Palestinian National Authority.
4. Under occupation, the development of a health system became a part of resistance, sharing in the high degree of popular mobilization and participation. The task now was to preserve the gains that had been made, provide for inadequacies and correct the poor distribution of services. There had been good NGO Israeli-Palestinian grass-roots, person-to-person cooperation, but the perpetuation of dependency must be avoided.
5. New issues had arisen with the implementation of the autonomy agreements and the transfer of authority in health matters to the Palestinian National Authority. In an effort to establish governmental structures, health councils had been formed in the West Bank and Gaza. Regrettably, those councils had neglected the highly developed and competent NGOs and had failed to draw upon their experience of the specific situation in Palestine. Moreover, the health councils had made serious attempts to divert funding from NGOs and channel it through the bureaucracy of the councils before they were capable of performing the necessary work.

6. Given their experience, popular base, flexibility, inventiveness and wide networks, NGOs deserved to be supported and empowered. Their survival must be assured legally, administratively and financially. Dr. Khamash concluded with a number of suggestions for principles and policies in the development of the health system.

Discussion

7. During the discussion of the papers, participants stressed the complex and changing nature of the present period of transition. In conclusion, the workshop endorsed the general recommendations contained in Dr. Khamash's paper:

- (a) Priority to be given to primary health care;
- (b) Fostering of networks of cooperation and coordination (both within the health sector and with other sectors);
- (c) Activities directed toward most deprived sector;
- (d) Evaluation of existing programmes for relevance, effectiveness and good management;
- (e) Encouragement of social accountability through financial and operational transparency;
- (f) Official agencies to contract for services from existing health organizations.

8. In addition, the workshop endorsed a call for a general forum on the formation of a Palestinian health care system, to be attended by representative of the Palestinian National Authority, NGOs and other interested parties.

WORKSHOP II WOMEN

Resource person: Zahira Kamal
Chairperson: Kathy Bergen
Rapporteur: Jan Abu Shakrah

Ms. Zahira Kamal made a presentation, stating that, until now, women had neglected their social agenda by giving priority to the national struggle. Following the peace process initiated in Madrid, there had been some re-evaluations, with the following results:

- (a) There was a fear of the Algerian experience, where women who had contributed to the national struggle now faced discrimination and repression;
- (b) Kindergartens, nurseries and production programmes were now viewed as not meeting women's needs and as not generating income;
- (c) There had been some duplication of effort, with neglect of other areas such as research and legal aid. That was now changing through coordination and development of new programmes. There were now five women's research centres, some legal centres dealing with laws, violence, etc.;

(d) Women's NGOs were now forming coalitions in the following areas:

- (i) Human rights and legal services;
- (ii) Development of a draft bill of women's rights following the release of a draft basic law. Lobbying had led to improvement in later drafts—closer to international standards on women's rights and non-discrimination;
- (iii) Focus was now on procedural and administrative law that was important for implementation. The draft Bill of Women's Rights was now being disseminated and used by women's organizations for awareness-building;

(e) The Technical Committees (supporting the Palestinian negotiating team) had only five women, as a result a Women's Affairs Technical Committee had been developed as a monitor and as a means of placing women's issues in the mainstream. There were now 60 women on the technical committees, not including the Women's Affairs Committee;

(f) A survey of professional women for a resource directory had been conducted;

(g) Specialized training (management, etc.) courses were being conducted;

(h) A legal analysis of existing laws from a gender perspective, as well as a review of implementation, would be included in a handbook for legal literacy training

(i) A choice was being made between models for mechanisms to address women's issues in government, raised at an expert workshop (Canada, Egypt, Italy, Philippines and South Africa). A decision had been taken on a women's machinery within the Palestinian National Authority, either a ministry or a women's department. A women's department was being established to review practices in all ministries;

(j) Elections:

- (i) Delegations had been sent to monitor the Jordanian elections;
- (ii) There was a need to focus on party reform (quotas for women candidates);
- (iii) Observers had been sent to the South African elections and the role of a women's charter had been observed;
- (iv) Women's participation in election training had been set at a one-third minimum;

(k) Preparation were being made for Beijing. Work was being undertaken on a united position;

(l) In terms of international development assistance to the Palestinian National Authority, there was very little focus or money for women's programmes (especially education and development);

(m) Focus was continuing on the release of women prisoners.

Points of discussion

What can international and solidarity NGOs do to help women's movements in Palestine?

- (a) Provide assistance to women running for election. Utilize international experience for elections and also in political procedures, legislation, etc.;
- (b) Provide programmes for the training of women in various social and economic fields and develop skills;
- (c) Utilize international experience in fighting violence against women;
- (d) Provide models/categories for various kinds of women's machinery in government, including seeing effective programmes on the ground in other countries.

WORKSHOP III EDUCATION

Resource person: Khader Musleh
Chairperson: Maria Gazi
Rapporteur: Paul E. Hoffman

1. In his presentation, Mr. Khader Musleh identified five challenges facing the Department of Education and Higher Learning of the Palestinian National Authority in assuming, as of 29 August 1994, responsibility for education in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967:

1. School buildings and their maintenance

2. Because the occupying Power had not built schools over the years to match the increasing number of students, Palestinian schools in the public sector were either overcrowded and/or the schools that existed were used for both morning and afternoon sessions. Until the year 2000, 420 new schools would be needed, 223 alone in the Gaza Strip. The Department of Education and Higher Learning would also need a building for its work at a total cost of up to \$1 billion.

2. Teaching staff

3. The teaching staff of the public schools under Israeli occupation had faced economic and "security" problems, resulting in resignations from the system and a drop in motivation of those who remained. A starting teacher's salary was approximately \$300 per month in the occupied territories, compared with \$800 to \$1,000 in Israel. Underpayment led to teachers seeking a second job, which negatively affected their teaching and contributed to a lack of motivation and effectiveness. Besides securing the necessary finances to raise teachers' salaries, the Department of Education was concentrating on teacher qualification and training and increasing the number of teachers employed.

3. Students

4. In 1993/94, 608,000 students were registered in public schools, 36.3 per cent of whom were in the Gaza Strip and the rest in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The situation in the occupied territories had led to the following:

(a) A significant number of pupils had dropped out of school for both economic and political reasons, resulting in a "return to", and an increase in, illiteracy;

(b) The economic situation affected the schooling of children in a number of ways. Children left school to help the family economically. Some had found employment as cheap labourers in Israel. Girls married young, abandoning their schooling. There was the widespread, fallacious idea among youth that the priority was political liberation, not education ("liberation before education");

(c) The level of academic achievement had worsened over the years, especially since the *intifadah* and the Israeli actions taken against the schools (e.g., prolonged closures). In that regard, private schools, with non-governmental control and support, had done better than government schools under the Israeli occupation authorities. In Beit Jala, for instance, a government school reported that only 4 Tawjihi students out of 45 had passed the Tawjihi (secondary school) examination whereas, in the private schools, up to 90 per cent of the students passed the examination. They had noted one improvement: cheating in examinations, which had become widespread, was now very low;

(d) Concerning the psycho-social effects of the occupation and the *intifadah*, there was need to establish counselling officers in the schools to help students psychologically and socially.

4. The curriculum

5. The Palestinian educational system was never Palestinian, and there never really was a Palestinian philosophy of education. West Bank schools followed the Jordanian system and philosophy of education. The Gaza Strip followed the Egyptian system and philosophy of education. Jerusalem schools followed either the Jordanian or the Israeli system. Those arrangements are no longer viable and acceptable. Therefore, the Palestinian authorities must develop a new arrangement.

5. Vocational and technical training and administration

6. The fifth challenge comprised a number of sub-challenges, such as vocational and technical training and the qualification of administrators and supervisors. The major problem facing technical and vocational education was the absence of a national policy: the absence of a joint effort to graduate technicians who could meet the needs of the local community. In an attempt to tackle the problem, the Council for Higher Education had established a committee to develop a new system for technical education and training in the West Bank and Gaza, to meet the new regional changes and challenges. The committee was established for four reasons:

(a) Technical education in the West Bank and Gaza had been linked with the Ministry of Education in Jordan. However, for a number of reasons, Palestine's needs differed from those of Jordan;

(b) The traditional academic curricula of both basic and secondary education in Palestinian schools lacked very basic vocational education;

(c) The change in technology required systems and curricula that could meet these changes;

(d) With the current regional peace process, Palestinians would be busy building the necessary infrastructure, which required a flexible system that could produce a workforce properly trained to handle the various fields.

The plan covers the following points:

(a) Identifying both special and general goals of technical and vocational education, then designing the necessary systems for meeting those goals;

(b) Establishing links between technical education and training on the one hand and the industrial sector on the other.

Discussion

Comments and suggestions from workshop participants centred on what could be learned from others and what could be the role of NGOs in responding to the challenges identified.

On the work of NGOs, various sides warned against relying exclusively on outside funding for tackling the identified challenges. A network of NGOs working in the field of education should be set up, with information on what each could contribute. How did non-Palestinian NGOs function? NGOs could not come up with anything like \$1 billion in assistance: even mention of such a huge sum might discourage international NGOs with limited resources from getting involved. Individual work camps, for instance, could be set up to rely on local initiatives and organizations and to receive some assistance, including expertise, from foreign NGOs from both developing and industrialized countries. Self-reliance should be the aim, not dependence.

In response to a question about the role of teachers' labour unions, it was reported that they existed, their role would undoubtedly be extended and become positive for innovation, but that thus far they had been illegal. In particular, they could be involved locally in maintaining and repairing school facilities. Nationally they could and should be involved, for instance, in curriculum development. They could be beneficial in putting Palestinian labour unions into contact with labour unions abroad. That could also be a function of international NGOs.

International NGOs could help to publicize the fact that until now there had been restrictions on education under occupation that had not been lifted: restrictions on students from Gaza studying on the West Bank, restrictions on the importation of books, etc.

Should not plans for Palestinian radio and television include "distance learning"? It was felt, however, that whatever necessity there might be for distance learning, it could never be a substitute in the learning experience for the interaction of teacher and students.

Should the Palestinian National Authority and its Department of Education not make a specific effort to learn from the Palestinian community in Israel, i.e., from the other side of the "Green Line"? Environmental studies were specifically mentioned.

The opinion was advanced that sensitive issues, such as textbook development on the history of Palestine, should not be postponed. Palestinian pupils in the occupied territories had been deprived since 1967 of the study of the history of their country and of the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Was there a possibility of joint Israeli-Palestinian work on that matter? Could NGOs help in that regard?

The suggestion was made that the Secretariat of the United Nations could provide information on which NGOs could do what, or at least assist in making such information available.

Annex III

List of participants and observers

NGO participants

African Society—OAU National Committee
Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization
Aide sanitaire suisse aux palestiniens
All India Peace and Solidarity Organization
American-Arab Anti-discriminatory Committee (ADC)
American Friends Service Committee
Arab Lawyers' Union
Arab Organization for Human Rights
Asociación amigos del pueblo palestino "Al-fatah"
Association of Forty
Association des études internationales
Association marocainé de soutien à la lutte du peuple palestinien
Association médicale franco-palestinienne
Asociación pro derechos humanos de España (APDHE)
Association pour l'union entre les peuples juifs et palestinien
Association suisse-palestine (ASP)
Berliner Missionswerk
Caritas suisse
Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development
Centro internazionale crocevia
Christian Children's Fund Inc.
Cimade—Service œcuménique entraide
Comité de soutien à Najdeh
Comité Palestine et Israel vivront
Committee for Educational Guidance for Arab Students
Community Care Organization
Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding
Danish-Palestinian Friendship Association
Democratic Front of Peace and Equality
Dialog Israel-Palastina
Druze Initiative Committee
Dutch Palestine Committee
Egyptian Solidarity Committee
Enfants réfugiés du monde
FIM-CISL: Italian Metalworker Federation and Italian Peace Association
Fund for Development of Vocational Education in the Arab Sector in Israel
Galilee Society of Health Research Services
General Federation of Trade Unions
Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity
Health Services Council
Indo-Arab Islamic Youth Association
Initiating Committee for Defending the Rights of Uprooted Arabs in Israel

International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
International Commission of Jurists
International Fund for Peace and Prosperity
International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)
International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations
Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP)
Mouvement sénégalais pour la paix
Movimiento por la paz, el desarme y la libertad
Najdeh
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
NORD-SUD XXI
Norwac—Norwegian Aid Committee
Oxfam—Belgium
Palestinian Agricultural Relief
Palestine Federation of Women's Action
Palestine Human Rights Information Center
Palestine Red Crescent Society
Palestine Solidarity Committee
Panorama, Center for the Dissemination of Alternative Information
Pax Christi International
Progressive Movement for Peace
Secours social palestinien
Society for Austro-Arab Relations
Spanish NGO Committee on the Question of Palestine
Swedish-Palestine Solidarity Association
Swiss Interchurch Aid
Swiss-Palestine Association
Terre des hommes
Terre des hommes France (TDHF)
Union of Health-Care Committees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
Union of Local Associations of the Unrecognized Villages (ULAUV)
Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees
United Nations Association of Egypt
United Nations Association of Sweden
Welfare Association
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Peace Council (WPC)
World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA)

NGO observers

Arab League of Jaffa
Centrale sanitaire suisse (CSS)
Centro italiano per la pace in el medio oriente
Committee for a Just Middle East
Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung E.V.
International Fellowship of Reconciliation
International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples (LIDLIP)
Mosul Vilayet Council
Mouvement international pour l'union fraternelle entre les races et les peuples (UFER)

Order of St. John
Palestinagruppene I Norge (PGN)
Palestinian Housing Council
UGET
Union général des travailleurs tunisiens (UGTT)
UN Watch—World Jewish Congress
World Federation of Democratic Youth
World Vision International

Panellists

MARAI ABDERRAHMAN, Secretary-General of the Palestine Committee for NGOs

NOURI ABDUL RAZZAK, Secretary-General of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization

JANICE ABU SHAKRAH, Director of the Palestine Human Rights Information Center in Jerusalem

ANIS AL QAQ, Chairman of the Health Services Council, West Bank

DON BETZ, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

ROMESH CHANDRA, Honorary President of the World Peace Council

STEPHEN P. DAY, Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

LARRY EKIN, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

FRITZ FROEHLICH, Austro-Arab Friendship Society

MARIA GAZI, member of the Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity

ILAN HALEVI, Special Adviser to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization

MUHAMMAD HALLAJ, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine

ELAINE HESSE STEEL, Director of the World Young Women's Christian Association (Geneva)

SAMIR HULEILEH, member of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR)

VICTOR KASHKOUSH, Director-General of the Welfare Association

PERETZ KIDRON, freelance journalist and writer

DAN LEON, Managing Editor, Palestine Israel Journal

AHMED SAAD, Israeli-Palestinian economist

IBRAHIM SHAÁBAN, Director of the Palestinian Housing Council

MAHA SHAWA, Economist and Head of the International Cooperation Division of the Health Department of the Palestinian Authority

KHADER SHKIRAT, Director, "Land and Water Establishment of the West Bank"

BRUCE STANLEY, Association of International Development Agencies

ZEHDI L. TERZI, Senior Adviser on International Organizations to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization

Workshop resource persons

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)

UMAYYEH KHAMMASH, Chairman, Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees

RUCHAMA MARTON, Chairman, Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights

KHADER MUSLEH, Professor, Bethlehem University, West Bank

Regional Coordinating Committees for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
Stephen P. Day

International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP)
Don Betz

Coordinating Committee for Latin American and Caribbean NGOs on the Question of Palestine (LACCP)
José Félix Ferreyra

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

Palestine Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine
Rev. Ibrahim Ayad
Marai Abderrahman

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

H.E. Mr. Kába Birani Cissé

Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chairman of the Committee and Head of the Delegation

H.E. Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhadi

Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Vice-Chairman of the Committee

H.E. Mr. Joseph Cassar

Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

Mr. M. Nasser Al Kidwa

Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations

Government observers

Austria

Bahrain

Brunei Darussalam

Bulgaria

Chile

China

Czech Republic

Colombia

Egypt

Finland

France

Germany

Indonesia

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Italy

Malaysia

Mexico

Morocco

Myanmar

Namibia

Norway

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE (ILO)

Shukri Dajani

Nabil Khoury

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

Said Hitti

UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Craig G. Mokhiber

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE
AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)**

Raja Khalidi

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)	A. Renlund
UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)	Seraydarian Souren
UNITED NATIONS NGO LIAISON OFFICE (Geneva)	Raymonde Martineau
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION	Takako Yasukawa
WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION	T.M. Azab

Intergovernmental organizations

LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES	Mr. Ala Almoman
ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)	H.E. Mr. Abdelaziz Aboghoosh Assistant General for Jerusalem and Palestine
	Mr. Nanguyalai S. Tarzi OIC Office, Geneva, Switzerland

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. Tayssir Al-Adjouri First Secretary
	Mr. Habes Shrouf Press Officer

Other observers

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)	Suzanne Fischbach Pierre Ryter
PALESTINE ECONOMIC COUNCIL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION (PECDAR)	Samir Houlailah Reem Mughrabi

