



**DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING**

and

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

**Vienna International Centre, Vienna
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The twelfth United Nations International NGO Meeting and ninth 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 Vienna International Centre from 29 August to 1 September 1995.

2. The meeting was convened in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 49/62 A and B of 14 December 1994, and was attended by 26 panelists and workshop leaders and by the representatives of 51 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 21 of them as observers. It was also attended by 37 Governments, 10 United Nations agencies and bodies, 3 intergovernmental organizations, 5 NGO coordinating committees, and a delegation of Palestine.

3. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation composed of Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of the delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou (Belarus), and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

4. The programme for the meeting was formulated by the Committee in consultation with members of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) and of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP) at a preparatory meeting held in New York on 27 and 28 February 1995. The central theme of the combined meeting was "The 50th anniversary of the United Nations — Palestine, NGOs and the implementation of United Nations resolutions".

5. At the opening meeting, participants were welcomed on behalf of the Government of Austria by Mr. Wolfgang Schallenberg, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A message from Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, was delivered by his representative, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna. Mr. Cissé spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, conveyed a message through his representative, Mr. Mohieddin Massoud. Statements were also made by Mr. Don Betz, ICCP Chairman, and Ms. Maria Gazi, Acting ECCP Chairman.

6. The invited experts made presentations in five panels, which were followed by discussion. In the first panel, entitled "The United Nations at its 50th anniversary and the question of Palestine", statements were made by Mr. Ilter Türkmen, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

7. The second panel was entitled "The present political situation". Statements were made by Mr. Victor Possouvaliouk, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation; Mr. Azmi Shuibi, Minister of Sports and Youth, Palestinian Authority; Mr. Abdulwahab Darawshe, Chairman of the Arab Democratic Party and member of the Knesset; Mr. Haim Baram, journalist and founding member of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace; and Mr. Taysir Aroui, professor of physics and mathematics at Bir Zeit University and member of the Palestinian National Council.

8. In the third panel, entitled "Elements of the final peace settlement, and obstacles to peace", statements on various sub-topics were made as follows: Mr. Ibrahim Matar, Deputy Director of American Near East Refugee Aid, spoke on the issue of Jerusalem and settlements; Mr. Elia Zureik, professor of sociology at Queen's College, Ontario, Canada, and member of the Palestinian delegation to the refugee working group of the multilateral peace talks, and Mr. Zakaria Abderahim,

Director-General of the Department for Returnee Affairs of the PLO, spoke on the issue of refugees and the right of return; and Mr. Hashem Mahameed, head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and member of the Knesset, addressed the topic of Israeli violations of its commitments under the Declaration of Principles.

9. The fourth panel, entitled "Palestine update", consisted of briefings on social issues and living conditions facing the Palestinians on the ground. Mr. Taysir Aroui, professor of physics and mathematics at Bir Zeit University and member of the Palestine National Council, spoke on economic and social development issues. Dr. Imad Tarawiyeh, Director-General, Ministry of Health, Palestinian Authority, addressed health-related questions. A statement on education and children was made by Mr. George B. Sahhar, Director of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Education of the Palestinian Authority. Ms. Eileen Kuttub, lecturer in sociology and anthropology and coordinator of the Women's Studies Programme at Bir Zeit University, spoke on women's issues.

10. The fifth panel considered the issue of "Building the NGO network — NGO strategies for action". Statements were made by Mr. Fathi Darwish, Director in the Ministry of International Cooperation and Planning of the Palestinian Authority; Ms. Emma Murphy, lecturer in Middle Eastern politics, University of Durham, United Kingdom; Mr. José Elias, Chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile and President of the University of San Andres; Mr. John Gee, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding; Mr. Don Betz, ICCP Chairman; Ms. Maria Gazi, Acting ECCP Chairman; and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs (NACC).

11. The participating NGOs adopted a communiqué reflecting their sense of the deliberations (see annex II).

12. In addition to the panels, a number of workshops were held concurrently for participants interested in developing specific action-oriented proposals. The workshop topics were linked to those of the panels. A demonstration in electronic skills was also organized. The workshop reports are contained in annex III.

II. OPENING STATEMENTS

13. Mr. Wolfgang Schallenberg, Secretary-General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcomed participants on behalf of his Government. He stated that his country and Government were following closely developments in the Middle East and welcomed the recent progress in negotiations by all parties. Expressing concern at actions by extremist forces opposed to the peace process, he reiterated Austria's utmost condemnation of any use of violence and terror by whatever side. His Government, convinced that political solutions are possible, stood ready to support all efforts as well as to make its own contribution. The Madrid Conference and subsequent developments offered vast possibilities to make headway in the peace process for the sake of all the peoples of the region. As the economic and social dimension of peace would constitute proof of success, it was of the utmost importance to intensify efforts in rebuilding and reshaping the economy of the region and to establish a regional order based on mutual trust, respect and friendship. The negotiation process should result in the achievement of the internationally-supported right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

14. Mr. Schallenberg stated that Austria had continued to display its particular interest in the Middle East by organizing events to increase understanding among the peoples of the region and by supporting the Palestinian people in its quest for self-determination and economic self-reliance. While progress had been made in negotiations, it was necessary to find solutions to all unresolved questions as quickly as possible. A special effort was needed to tackle successfully topics related to water procurement, land degradation, pollution of the sea, arms control and disarmament, and the question of Jerusalem. During this period of transition, the focus was shifting from political

considerations to the problems of social and economic development and reconstruction. With this understanding, Austria wholeheartedly subscribed to the comprehensive engagement of the European Union in support of the Palestinian cause. The Union had taken over the coordinating role in the Palestinian elections and would welcome a Palestinian delegation to the forthcoming Barcelona conference launching the comprehensive Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Austria had provided assistance to the Palestinians in the fields of health, agriculture, housing and vocational training.

15. Mr. Schallenberg welcomed the role of NGOs in moving the political discussion forward and in increasing awareness of the need for political, economic and social reform both at the grass-roots level and on an international level. The NGO community had been the backbone of Palestinian social and economic life for many years and had paved the way for a smooth transition. Austria was of the view that all forums dealing with the Middle East, including NGO meetings on the question of Palestine, should adapt to the new realities and contribute to promoting dialogue and understanding and to furthering the peace process. Austria believed that consideration should be given to a substantial change of the existing mandate in order to best reflect such a new orientation. He called on the meeting to express unequivocal support for the peaceful changes on the basis of existing realities and thereby to enhance the shaping of the future structures of Palestine.

16. In his message, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, stressed the importance of the supportive role of NGOs in achieving United Nations objectives. NGO activities to promote a just settlement of the Palestine question and to assist in the social and economic development of the Middle East were particularly noteworthy. While there had been some unfortunate setbacks, the Middle East peace process had made progress owing to the determination of the parties to proceed in the implementation of the agreements reached and to work to resolve their differences through negotiations. The Secretary-General hoped that negotiations for the second stage of the peace process would soon prove successful and would lay the groundwork for the eventual settlement of all outstanding issues based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

17. Expressing concern over acts of violence by those opposed to peace and stressing the need for tangible improvement in living conditions, the Secretary-General reaffirmed that the United Nations stood ready to contribute to an effective transition which could help build the foundations for a lasting peace. The work already undertaken by the Secretary-General's representative, Mr. Terje Rød Larsen, and the contributions made by the donor countries were gradually beginning to bear fruit and a number of improvements with regard to institution-building and the development of infrastructure had taken place. The network of NGOs and community-based organizations served vital functions in this respect; the necessary cooperation could be further promoted through the organization of meetings such as the one being held.

18. In his message, Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, called on all peace- and justice-loving forces in the world to increase and activate their support for, and assistance to, the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace based on the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His message is reproduced in annex I.

19. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, stressed that an important objective of the meeting was to develop a more effective role for NGOs in responding to the challenges posed by the developments in the peace process and the tasks of reconstruction and nation-building facing the Palestinians. Referring to the fact that the United Nations had been involved with the question of Palestine for most of its history, the Chairman stated that the General Assembly had reaffirmed repeatedly that the United

Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question until it was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy.

20. The Committee had recognized at an early stage the importance of the role of NGOs and had sought to involve them in its work and to devise ways to improve its cooperation with them. The changed situation since 1993 presented many new possibilities for concrete involvement on the ground and for solidarity action abroad. After informing participants about the objectives and programme of work of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in 1995, the Chairman stressed the continued importance that the Committee attached to its work with NGOs in promoting assistance to the Palestinians and in the defence of their fundamental rights during the period of transition.

21. In his statement, Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of the ICCP, recalled the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to human rights. The founders of the United Nations had declared that all peoples were endowed with certain inalienable rights. In the final analysis, peace had to be rooted firmly in law and designed to protect the powerless. As the Member States were considering the role to be played by the United Nations in the future, it was necessary to remind them that the question of Palestine had been on the Organization's agenda for almost fifty years and to press them to arrive at an honourable solution. Rather than accepting a peripheral role in the quest for peace in the Middle East, the United Nations and the NGOs should remind the international community persistently of its responsibility to resolve this issue justly. Peace in the Middle East could only be attained with the establishment of the State of Palestine.

22. Tracing the history of NGO efforts to establish a coordinated network on the question of Palestine, Mr. Betz stated that many NGOs were still active on this question and that advances in technology provided greatly improved possibilities for NGOs to remain in effective contact with one another and with a coordinating entity. He called for a revitalization of the NGO network, the nucleus of which should be composed of Palestinian NGOs together with their international counterparts active on the ground, and he asked for assistance by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in this endeavour. He proposed that such an effort be launched at the next symposium or meeting which, in his view, should be held in Jerusalem and be well prepared in advance.

23. Ms. Maria Gazi, Acting Chairman of the ECCP, noted that, since 1947, many resolutions had been adopted in favour of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and confirming the right of the Palestinian people to establish its own independent State. However, Israel, with the support of the United States, had flouted those resolutions. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles, many countries had withdrawn from the scene on the grounds that they did not want to interfere with the negotiating process between the parties. The ECCP had received such an answer when it had submitted a petition regarding Israel's non-implementation of the Declaration of Principles to the European Union Presidency. Referring to the slow pace of negotiations, the expansion of settlements, the closures of the territories and the situation of the Palestinian prisoners, she stated that the United Nations had an obligation to see that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) were fully implemented and that other relevant resolutions were not disregarded or rescinded.

24. Ms. Gazi pointed out that more than 100 Palestinian NGOs had met in Jerusalem in preparation for the Vienna meeting in order to discuss many of the same issues among themselves and with representatives of the Palestinian Authority. However, many of them had not been able to come to Vienna because of lack of funds. She reiterated the view that the NGO event to be organized by the United Nations in 1996 should be held in Jerusalem. Alternatively, the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator in the occupied territories should be requested to convene such a meeting.

III. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

Panel I. The United Nations at its 50th anniversary and the question of Palestine

25. Mr. Ilter Türkmen, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), said that, since its inception, the United Nations had been deeply involved with the fate of the Palestinian people. For over 45 years, it had provided systematic assistance to an entire people, assistance which was unprecedented in its history. He pointed out that UNRWA ranked as one of the most successful humanitarian assistance operations in United Nations history. Throughout that period, it had provided essential education, health, and relief and social services to a Palestine refugee population that to date numbered more than 3 million. UNRWA's accomplishments represented a model response by the United Nations to an urgent and long-standing humanitarian crisis - the plight of the Palestine refugees.

26. Citing the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, the civil conflict in Lebanon in 1975, the Israeli invasion in Lebanon in 1982, and the intifada, he stressed that UNRWA had to cope with recurring hostilities in the region which generated new needs among the refugee population, necessitated emergency operations and altered the political landscape. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles, UNRWA had established a close working relationship with the Palestinian Authority with the understanding that Agency operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would eventually be transferred to the Palestinian Authority. Coordination mechanisms had been established in the education, health, and relief and social services sectors. UNRWA's Peace Implementation Programme was a comprehensive investment programme designed to contribute to improving infrastructure and stabilizing socio-economic conditions and to making the results of the peace process felt at the local level. He said that the forthcoming relocation of UNRWA's headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip was a demonstration of the commitment of the United Nations to the peace process, underlined its confidence in the Palestinian Authority and contributed to the economic development of the Gaza Strip.

27. Mr. Türkmen pointed out that UNRWA and many NGOs cooperated jointly on a wide range of activities in the field, mainly in the relief and social services sectors, which had yielded positive results for the Agency, the NGOs and, of course, for the Palestine refugees. UNRWA's operations also benefited from the close cooperation with a number of United Nations agencies. In conclusion, he stated that the establishment of UNRWA had secured for the Palestine refugees a good education for many generations of children, above-average health standards, job opportunities and special assistance for the poorest families. It had helped the Palestinians to maintain their identity and their culture and constituted an element of political and social stability in the area.

28. Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, emphasized that the United Nations had been dealing with the question of Palestine almost since its inception. Major resolutions had been adopted by the General Assembly in 1947 and 1948 deciding the partition of Palestine into two States and dealing with the issue of the refugees after the 1948 war. Later, the Assembly established UNRWA to provide relief to the refugees. The Security Council, for years, did not adopt any substantial resolutions; only after the 1967 war did the adoption of resolution 242 (1967) change that situation. At that time also, the General Assembly established a special committee to investigate Israeli practices. Since 1974, the Assembly had dealt with the Palestinian national dimension, inviting the PLO to participate in its work, recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, namely, the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to independence and sovereignty. It established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Security Council dealt with Israeli practices in the occupied territories, the question of Jerusalem, settlements, deportations and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

29. Mr. Al-Kidwa said that the concept of the permanent responsibility of the United Nations had evolved and that responsibility could not be ended until the question was resolved in all its aspects. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the approach of the United Nations was determined by four principles: support for the peace process, affirmation of the permanent responsibility of the United Nations, reaffirmation of the United Nations position regarding the final settlement issues, and maintenance of the relevant machinery, including rejection of attempts to neutralize the General Assembly and its organs. Referring to the Palestinian Rights Committee, he stressed that its mandate should remain unchanged, but its programme of work and related issues might be subject to new ideas in order to provide for a broader participation of Member States from other geographic regions.

30. Mr. Al-Kidwa pointed out that twenty-seven Security Council resolutions and hundreds of General Assembly resolutions relating to this issue had been adopted in the fifty years of their existence, but only a very limited number of those resolutions had been implemented. However, those resolutions put very important brakes on Israeli plans and programmes, keeping the Israeli Government under legal and political pressure. In conclusion, he said that the United Nations had evolved into a truly universal organization of States, and he expressed the hope that it would live up to its responsibilities for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Panel II. The present political situation

31. Mr. Victor Possouvalioug, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, emphasized that the fifty-year history of the question of Palestine and the Middle East conflict in general reflected the difficult and controversial dynamics of the whole system of international relations since the Second World War. The region had become an area of flagrant violations of basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions had always contributed to and encouraged the shaping of a feasible solution and had led eventually to the shift from confrontation to the development of mutually acceptable pragmatic solutions. The end of the cold war was, however, the decisive factor in opening the way towards a settlement in the Middle East. At the same time, Arabs and Israelis drastically changed their stances and began practical work towards finding solutions.

32. In describing the different stages of the peace negotiations, Mr. Possouvalioug noted that United Nations representation in that process had continuously widened, and he supported its involvement in the practical implementation of the agreements, such as the observation of elections, as well as in rendering and coordinating assistance to the Palestinian people. He stressed the importance of the multilateral groups discussing issues of regional concern: arms control, security, economic development, water resources management, protection of the environment, and refugees. The process initiated by the Casablanca conference in 1994 and to be reviewed at Amman in the fall of 1995 should establish a sound foundation for peace and good neighbourliness in the Middle East. He said that any successful progress of the dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis required tireless efforts of the co-sponsors and the whole international community to promote rapprochement of the parties and to respond promptly to critical situations. Any manifestation of extremism, terrorism in particular, created the danger of destabilization and deserved the strongest condemnation. The same was true for any unilateral actions.

33. Mr. Possouvalioug commended the work of the Palestinian Authority and encouraged it to maintain a high degree of coordination with the Israeli side in solving daily problems. He stressed that Russia was directly involved in assistance programmes to the Palestinians, especially in equipping the Palestinian police forces and training them. In conclusion, he pointed out that the new realities in the region had also been reflected in the resolutions of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and he expressed the hope that the major trends would be reflected in all corresponding United Nations documents. He commended the NGOs for mobilizing public opinion and encouraged them to promote, in particular, the humanitarian links between the Palestinian and

Israeli peoples. He expressed confidence in the irreversibility of the regional processes initiated in the Middle East.

34. **Mr. Azmi Shuibi**, Minister of Sports and Youth in the Palestinian Authority, said that the negotiations on a political settlement were in an acute crisis because of the continuous delays and the reluctance of the Israeli side to implement a number of points in the Declaration of Principles. The refusal to establish a safe corridor between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had transformed the Gaza Strip into an island that was subject to lengthy closures. This had led to a deepening of the economic crisis, a rise in the unemployment rate and the obstruction of Palestinian civil institution-building. The refusal to withdraw the Israeli army from Hebron, because of a small group of settlers, and the continued expansion of settlements elsewhere obstructed a solution that would guarantee the future integrity of the Palestinian territory and freedom of movement for Palestinian citizens. Moreover, the Israeli Government continued to refuse to allow Palestinians living in Jerusalem to participate in the general elections. It tried to dictate the number of members of the elected council, which was an internal Palestinian issue, and refused to allow the United Nations to participate in the international supervision of those elections. Regarding the refugees, a quadripartite Palestinian-Israeli-Egyptian-Jordanian negotiating committee had been formed to deal with the issue; however, after two years not one refugee had returned. Although negotiations on Jerusalem should start in May 1996, the Israeli side was taking arbitrary and unilateral measures with the aim of Judaizing and isolating the city, denying Palestinians access to it, including access to holy places.

35. **Mr. Shuibi** stated that the transfer of civil authority and responsibilities to the Palestinian side was complicated by the latent desire of Israel to retain control over the resources of the Palestinian people, such as land and water, as well as over administration and trade. The settlers, whose numbers did not exceed 2 per cent of the Palestinian population, enjoyed 80 per cent of the Palestinian water. He concluded by saying that the proclaimed aim of the Palestinian people had been and was to exercise their right to self-determination, to set up their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with the State of Israel, in a society where justice, equality and democracy prevailed.

36. **Mr. Abdulwahab Darawshe**, Chairman of the Arab Democratic Party and member of the Knesset, expressed concern that the Israeli Government would hand over to the Palestinians only parts of the West Bank and Gaza in order to keep control over territory, resources and overall security. It would try to maintain control over the roads, requiring special permits to travel between Palestinian cantons. This could be the cause for the next Palestinian uprising, endangering the whole peace process. Palestinians living in Israel feared that the current peace process was only a tool for Israel to end the Arab boycott and to establish direct bilateral and trade relations with each of the Arab countries. He emphasized that it was essential to eliminate military control over the West Bank and Gaza and to dismantle settlements for preparing for the next stage of economic development. It was also essential that the settlers be controlled by the Israeli Government.

37. **Mr. Darawshe** pointed out the significance for the peace process of the upcoming national elections in Israel. If the center-left government, which included the Labour Party, Meretz, Hadash and the Arab Democratic Party, did not succeed in returning to power, the whole peace process would collapse. If the Arab Democratic Party could unify the Arab public in Israel, which comprised 18 per cent of the population, under the umbrella of one list, it would be able to multiply its representation and influence Israeli political positions more significantly. He recalled how the Arab Democratic Party, which represented the Palestinian minority in Israel, had recently managed to prevent the Israeli Government from confiscating Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

38. **Mr. Darawshe** called on all countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority, thus recognizing the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and statehood. Many countries had already opened representative offices in Gaza. Also, despite the generous pledges for

assistance from the international community, the actual transfer of funds was made very difficult, jeopardizing the realization of projects for infrastructure development.

39. Mr. Haim Baram, journalist with the Jerusalem weekly Kol ha-Ir and founding member of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, said that the second stage of the Oslo Agreement still awaited full implementation because the Israeli Government insisted that all the Israeli settlements would continue to exist. Furthermore, the security of the settlers had become a major issue. More Palestinian land had to be expropriated in order to build special roads that would circumvent Palestinians towns and villages, for the exclusive use of the settlers. In his view, the massive investment in such programmes meant that the Israeli Government had no intention of uprooting those settlements in the foreseeable future. The settlements constituted a lethal time bomb that could undermine the entire peace process and encourage extremists in both camps. The 130,000 settlers could be divided into two categories: ideologists, who based their claim to the occupied West Bank on the Bible; and ordinary Israelis, from the poor strata of the population, most of them Oriental Jews, who had been sent to the occupied territories by various Israeli governments, attracted by the low prices of housing. Most of them would return to Israel if they were given an alternative.

40. Mr. Baram said that, since its establishment in 1991, the Labour Government had sought new ways to exploit the political weakness of the PLO. Yasser Arafat had fulfilled his promises and was making the most extreme concessions. The Israelis, aided by the United States, were increasingly successful in dictating their terms, aided by the United States. Israel had gained much and given very little. Israel still coveted, quite openly, at least 35 per cent of the West Bank, opposed the establishment of a Palestinian State and insisted on maintaining the illegal occupation and the Israelization of East Jerusalem. The massive attempts to erase the Arab character of East Jerusalem continued with impunity. The international community should intervene in order to redress the balance in favour of the weaker side. Without some independent European foreign policy, the peace process would collapse. The minimal conditions for peace should be met, such as the establishment of an independent Palestinian State alongside Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the removal of the Israeli settlements.

41. Mr. Taysir Arouri, professor of physics and mathematics at Bir Zeit University and member of the Palestine National Council, recalled the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War when conditions were imposed on the defeated States without laying a solid foundation for permanent peace. That led, in turn, to the Second World War. As regards the Middle East, he said that for the first time since the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there was a historic and realistic opportunity to create peace, if the current negotiations could lead to stability in the Middle East. In his view, the recent agreements between the PLO and Israel were short-sighted, did not establish a stable peace and created conditions for the development of extremism and fanaticism.

42. Mr. Arouri stated that a real peace process should address three major issues: Palestinian national rights, economic development and democracy. Implementation of national rights, including independence, meant the withdrawal of Israeli forces, in compliance with Security Council resolution 242 (1967). However, so far, withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was restricted to 68 per cent of its area, with 32 per cent of the area remaining for 1,500 settlers. As regards the redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank, Israel did not want to apply the second part of the Oslo Agreement. It aimed to destroy the geographical unity of the West Bank, isolating its various areas and transforming the settlements on the West Bank into strips and connected areas, in preparation for their annexation by Israel at a later date, together with the definition of new borders for the West Bank. The Oslo Agreement postponed crucial issues such as Jerusalem, borders and the future of settlements to the final status negotiations on condition that neither of the two parties would take any steps that would prejudice the ultimate solution. Israel's policy and the practical measures with regard to Jerusalem had violated those pledges. East Jerusalem had been isolated

from the other areas of the West Bank for over two years. The question of Jerusalem, together with the fate and future of the land and water of the West Bank, i.e. settlement and land confiscation, should be the major factors in judging the peace process. With regard to economic development, he emphasized that the confidence of the Palestinians in a peaceful future could not be isolated from an effective economic policy. The Cairo Agreement, including the Protocol on Economic Relations (see A/49/180), failed to address in a proper, practical and pragmatic manner the results of the situation imposed by the Israeli occupation of over 27 years, the most important of which was the high degree of subordination of the Palestinian economy and infrastructure to Israel. Wages earned by Palestinian workers in the occupied territories represented only one third of the gross national product. Unemployment had risen sharply in the past two years and the standard of living had dropped rapidly. A solution was closely connected to democracy. The creation of a climate for investment was the most important task. This primarily required democracy, including the rule of modern laws, as well as the existence of stable democratic institutions capable of ensuring security and protection of the law.

Panel III. Elements of the final peace settlement, and obstacles to peace

1. Jerusalem and settlements

43. Mr. Ibrahim Matar, Deputy Director of American Near East Refugee Aid, said that shortly after the June 1967 war, the Jewish State began a series of measures intended not only to maintain control of Jerusalem, but also to change its demographic character, by expanding its boundaries threefold. Since 1967, 6,500 acres of mostly private land had been confiscated from Palestinians in the annexed areas of East Jerusalem. The last confiscation in 1995 was suspended after the Arab Democratic Party in Israel threatened to drop its support for the present Labour Government. With the completion of the settlement of Ramat Shufat, the Palestinian population of East Jerusalem would be encircled and flanked by the Jewish fortresses. The 155,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem would also be outnumbered, as the number of Jewish settlers was to reach 180,000 by the end of 1995. In addition, the Israelis had enlarged the Jewish quarter inside the walled Old City of Jerusalem, by destroying over 135 homes in the old Moroccan quarter, confiscating 30 acres of Palestinian property and evicting another 5,000 Palestinians from the Moslem quarter. As a result, the Jewish quarter of the Old City was today three times larger than it was in 1948. It was estimated that the market value of the seized Palestinian property exceeded \$1 billion.

44. Mr. Matar stated that the Israeli colonization of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights was not an irreversible process. In the past, as a prerequisite for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Jewish settlements in the Sinai had been dismantled by the Israeli Likud Government. The Security Council had called for the dismantling of the settlements, and the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibited the occupying power from establishing civilian settlements. In addition, all relevant General Assembly resolutions had pointed to the illegality of Jewish settlements. Since 1978, succeeding United States administrations had regarded Jewish settlements as illegal and an obstacle to peace. The present United States Administration had identified the settlements problem as one which complicated the negotiations and had a very negative impact on the Palestinians as well as in the wider Arab world. The Israeli High Court ruled, in one of the most important cases related to the issue of settlements, that Jewish settlements were temporary and by implication should be dismantled when the Israeli occupation ended.

45. Mr. Matar also stated that the Palestinian negotiators should further require Israel to pay reparations for all the destruction and damage it had caused to Palestinian villages and crops. Three villages in the West Bank and three communities in the Jordan Valley had been destroyed and replaced by Jewish settlements. The reparations should also cover the cost of the use of Palestinian private and state property and water resources by Jewish settlements for the past 29 years of occupation. He concluded by saying that settlements remained a key factor in the success

or failure of the peace process. For the Palestinians, settlements would destroy any hope for a viable future Palestinian state.

2. Refugees - right of return

46. Mr. Elia Zureik, professor of sociology at Queens College, Kingston, Canada, and member of the Palestinian delegation to the refugee working group of the multilateral peace talks, said that the Declaration of Principles allowed for a discussion of the Palestine refugee issue in two stages. The 1967 refugees were being discussed through a quadripartite committee composed of the Palestinians, Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Since August 1994, as a result of the discussions, Israel promised to consider 2,000 cases a year. The 1948 refugees were supposed to be discussed during the final status talks, after the Palestinian elections and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces.

47. Mr. Zureik said that Israel's position was indecisive. It created facts on the ground to confront pressure from the international community and it adopted bureaucratic procedures to complicate the process. It argued its position by citing security reasons and demography, i.e. not to threaten the Jewish character of the state, and by stating that General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, which called for the return of the Palestinian refugees, did not apply to the Palestinian case. He described the Israeli negotiating tactic of segmenting the Palestinian refugees in numerous categories and then subjecting them to conflicting bureaucratic criteria, in order to hamper their return. There was disagreement about the number of 1948 refugees. Israel agreed to be party to paying any compensation, under the condition that the claims should be calculated on a global basis and paid with a lump sum raised internationally and administered by an international organization, and also that the loss or damage of property incurred by Jews during the 1948 war should enter into the calculation. There was also a serious controversy about the number of 1967 war refugees. The Palestinian estimate was close to 800,000 refugees, while Israel referred to 200,000. A major point of contention in the refugee working group was the Israeli definition of family, which meant nuclear family, knowing that in Arab society family meant the extended family.

48. Mr. Zureik said that the Palestinian position with regard to the refugee issue was governed by weakness, lack of coordination with other Arab countries and the absence of concrete plans to absorb returning refugees, whether from 1948 or 1967. The Israeli position was unlikely to represent anything remotely close to the Palestinian position, or even of other Arab positions. Israel would allow a certain number of Palestinian refugees from the 1967 war to return but not the refugees from the 1948 war, because that would be admitting its guilt regarding their exodus. While Palestinians, supported by Arab Governments, continued to refer to General Assembly resolution 194 (III), the United States had treated that resolution as irrelevant to the settling of the refugee issue in the current framework of the peace talks.

49. Mr. Zakaria Abderahim, Director-General of the PLO Department for Returnee Affairs, stated that the 1948 refugees and their descendants included not only those who lived in the camps registered with UNRWA but also those scattered throughout the Arab and non-Arab countries. There were approximately 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, 34 per cent of whom lived in the camps. The 1967 refugees, called displaced persons, constituted a separate group, being dealt with by the Security Council in its resolutions 237 (1967) and 242 (1967) with the aim of avoiding Israeli procrastination regarding their return.

50. Referring to the 1948 refugees, Mr. Abderahim said that it was necessary to determine the number of refugees, the type of travel documents and passports they bore, and their distribution in Arab countries, and to establish property records. The United Nations records, in which a complete microfilm register was kept on all those subjects, should be used. A special committee should be responsible for overseeing that work.

51. Mr. Abderahim indicated that a future Palestinian government, following the declaration and the establishment of an independent State, would be prepared to grant Palestinian passports to refugees in the host countries and to sign a protocol with those countries regulating the status of the refugees as regards employment and residence, and also to accept any number of those refugees whose continued presence was not desired by any Arab State. He stressed the importance of the return of the PLO Office to Lebanon, to seek a solution to the problems of the Palestinian refugees at the organizational, political, social, educational and cultural levels, until their right of return had been achieved through negotiations with the Israeli side. In conclusion, he asked for consultations between the Palestinian side and the co-sponsors of the peace process, as well as with the members of the Security Council and the member States of the European Union, to convince the Government of Israel to begin, before May 1996, negotiations concerning the ultimate status of the refugees, to achieve the recognition of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and other relevant international resolutions, and to speed up the implementation by Israel of the agreements reached in the multilateral refugee committee regarding the reunification of families.

3. Israel's violation of its commitments under the Declaration of Principles

52. Mr. Hashem Mahameed, Head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and member of the Knesset, stated that since the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the Israeli Government had been carrying out a systematic exercise to void and undermine the two basic principles upon which the Agreement was based, namely, the principle of withdrawal and the principle of sovereignty over the territories during the transition phase, for Israel wanted to keep under its control the subsurface resources, including water. According to the Agreement, Israel should withdraw completely from the West Bank before the elections to the Palestinian Council. However, phase B was inserted in the Agreement to protect the settlers and ensure their security. Consequently, the final phase of withdrawal was postponed and the clauses of the Agreement would remain without implementation dates. That situation disclosed the real Israeli intentions to prolong the negotiations and save time. He expressed concern that the Israeli side would attempt to convert the Palestine question from a national cause into an administrative issue under Israeli colonial domination.

53. Mr. Mahameed referred to the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank during the past two years and said that the Israeli Government was continuing to build roads to interconnect those settlements in order to create a geographical continuity that would constitute a geographical extension of Israel, over which the Government would claim sovereignty in the future. That policy would create a fragile and strange Palestinian entity, less than a state but more than self-rule, divided into three fragmented cantons. In Jerusalem, construction work was continuing for the expansion of the borders of what had been called Greater Jerusalem, while Palestinian growth, whether demographic, economic or social growth or housing, was impeded. Work was being pursued at an astonishing pace, alongside efforts to prevent the activities of Palestinian centres and institutions, including those that existed before the Declaration of Principles. Stressing the importance of the prisoners' issue, he said that the Government of Israel was sowing discord between various groups by pursuing a policy of selective release.

54. In conclusion, Mr. Mahameed recalled the recent experience in the Knesset relating to the confiscation of Arab land in Jerusalem and said that it had shown how a modest force, the Arab factions in the Knesset, through firmness and steadfastness had put pressure on the Government of Israel and had forced it to repeal a decision. He expressed regret that the Security Council had not been able to adopt a resolution to condemn the seizure. He emphasized that Israel was approaching a decisive stage with the forthcoming elections to the Knesset. A prerequisite for the leftist forces of peace was to distinguish themselves from the Likud and related forces by adopting a clear and distinct position rather than appeasing it the way the present coalition was doing.

Panel IV. Palestine update

1. Economic and social development

55. Mr. Taysir Arouri, professor of physics and mathematics at Bir Zeit University and member of the Palestine National Council, said that since the early 1980s, the Palestinian economy had been in a state of permanent stagnation, evidenced by a high level of unemployment. That situation was the direct consequence of the policies of the Israeli occupation authorities - expropriating land, seizing water resources and imposing exorbitant taxes on Palestinians, thus limiting the scope for investment and other economic activities and sharply decreasing the level of public services provided. The occupation authorities also weakened the Palestinian institutional infrastructure, undermining and marginalizing municipalities and local councils, universities, trade unions, and professional and non-governmental organizations. During the years of the intifada and the Gulf war, the situation deteriorated further. The Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements had not brought a positive change in the economic situation, mainly because of the Israeli policy of blockade of the occupied territories which prevented Palestinians from moving freely between Jerusalem, Gaza and even different parts of the West Bank. He expressed the view that the Protocol on Economic Relations signed in Paris by Israel and the Palestinian Authority constituted a blow to the prospects for economic and social development in the occupied territories because it deprived the Palestinian economy of control over natural resources such as land and water and tourist sites. The trade agreements concluded were also disadvantageous to the Palestinian economy.

56. Analyzing problems and challenges facing the Palestinian economy, Mr. Arouri said that the widespread unemployment should be tackled mainly by adapting the educational system, expanding and diversifying vocational training and reorganizing university education. Poverty should be addressed by creating employment opportunities for members of poor families and providing them with assistance and training. A delicate balance should be established between funds for economic development and for social welfare. The size of state agencies should be limited. To correct distortions in the Palestinian economy, he suggested reducing the high degree of dependency on the Israeli economy, establishing national institutions based on scientific principles and attracting the best professional talents, and renovating and expanding the economy's infrastructure in order to create an appropriate investment environment for the development of the Palestinian private sector and for attracting Palestinian and foreign capital. For the same purpose, radical reform of the legal and organizational structures was required.

57. To remedy the weakness of the domestic productive base, Mr. Arouri called for changing the limited diversification and low profit margins of Palestinian industry. Developing agriculture, which would help to absorb a large number of workers, should, however, take into account the limited water resources available. Development of tourism would advance the entire Palestinian economy. Particular attention should be paid to the banking sector as a formative element; the Palestinian Authority must encourage local and foreign private investment. In conclusion, he stated that a stable and lasting peace in the region must have as its main prerequisite the end of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, so that Palestinians might exercise control over their land, water and natural resources. That would require a correction of the course of the current Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. In addition, he emphasized that the complex economic and social situation could not be addressed separate from democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the creation of appropriate conditions for investment.

2. Health

58. Dr. Imad Tarawiyeh, Director-General in the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority, pointed out that the Palestinian Health Authority had inherited a fragmented, uncoordinated health-care system. Health care was selective rather than comprehensive and the cost of health services for the consumer was high. Only a small fraction of the total population benefited from a health insurance plan. Environmental hazards were not properly addressed. He described the overall situation as poor by international standards. The Palestinian Authority was making efforts aimed at ensuring continuity of service and at changing the system, upgrading equipment and creating essential technical departments to meet the needs of the population. The process of change faced political problems, such as border restrictions and frequent closures, and economic problems, in addition to demographic pressures. In spite of those obstacles, the Palestinian Authority, in cooperation with international agencies, had succeeded in supporting and strengthening the building of the Ministry and its departments, primary health care and hospital divisions. Steps were taken to link the systems in the West Bank and in Gaza, to harmonize activities with UNRWA, and to support non-governmental organizations. He emphasized that the Palestinian Health Council, which included members from other national sectors, was actively involved in building the Ministry departments. The future activities of the Council would focus on major health issues such as policies, standards, regulations, intersectoral coordination and health planning.

3. Education and children

59. Mr. George B. Sahhar, Director of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Education of the Palestinian Authority, said that the Ministry had the enormous challenge of restructuring a school system that had been purposefully neglected for the last 27 years of Israeli occupation. Many important changes needed to be introduced to stop the ongoing deterioration of Palestinian education. He pointed out that education was the biggest service sector run by the Palestinian Authority. At present, about 70 per cent of the school system was public, 25 per cent was run by UNRWA, and 5 per cent was private. Out of a population of about 2,000,000 people in the West Bank and Gaza, 654,697 were school students, constituting about 35 per cent of the total population; 21,046 teachers and 5,000 other personnel were employed in the education sector. In the system of higher education, there were approximately 24,000 students in the eight universities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

60. The Ministry of Education had 150 employees, most of them operating through ten specialized departments within the Ministry. Through the assistance of a number of multilateral organizations and many supporters, the Ministry was building its capacity in educational management and planning. It had set priorities for educational development work for the coming years: access to schooling, quality of learning and relevance of education to social needs. The Ministry had defined the following areas that required urgent outside financial and technical assistance: school rehabilitation and construction, maintenance of 867 schools in the West Bank and 137 in Gaza, equipment and educational materials, curriculum development and textbooks, textbook printing and distribution, establishment of a curriculum development centre, teacher training, vocational and technical training, student activities and, finally, policy formulation and planning capacity of the Ministry, which meant long-term development of schooling and education with the assistance of UNESCO's International Institute and UNICEF.

61. The Ministry had already started setting up an educational information centre with the help of UNICEF and funding from the European Union and Sweden for medium and long-term planning and policy formulation. The first major concrete step was the publishing of the first statistical yearbook about Palestinian education. It was also planned to set up a general education council, with most of its members from the community, to advise the Ministry on major policy issues.

4. Women

62. Ms. Eileen Kuttab, lecturer in sociology and anthropology and coordinator of the Women's Studies Programme at Bir Zeit University, said that after the Palestinian-Israeli agreements, realistic options for improving conditions for the poor in general, and women in particular, remained questionable because their implementation was already facing structural obstacles. The main objective of the arguments was the globalization of a new economic and political order under United States hegemony with an enhanced market economy as the only economic option. The real challenges facing the Palestinian people were the unsolved political and national issues, which prevented other social and economic developments from taking place. The NGOs, including the women's movement, gained from the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of 1988, which promoted, within the national struggle, enhancement of a democratic civil society. After the intifada, new political, social and economic conditions had emerged that neutralized women's activities. Diplomacy became a major tool in the national struggle, thus promoting women technocrats, but marginalizing women's grass-roots participation. During the intifada, women's participation in the national struggle was not accompanied by an equal awareness of the need for social liberation. The Palestinian women's movement, successful in mobilizing women around the national issue, was unable to build a relationship between national and social liberation struggles. Also, Israeli oppressive practices, banning new democratic formations, led to a strengthening of traditional patriarchal structures like the family and the political party, negatively affecting the level of women's participation. The emergence of reactionary fundamentalist social and political movements hampered the status of women.

63. Ms. Kuttab stated that despite the historical involvement of women in the national struggle for self-determination, women's participation in the political process during the transition had been minimal. Their representative bodies had been excluded from all decision-making processes; for example, out of 410 members of the different technical committees, only five had been women. She objected to the establishment of a special women's technical committee, whose consultative status cast doubts on its ability to influence political decisions. The same lack of women's participation prevailed in the Palestinian Council for Economic Development and Reconstruction. She called on the Palestinian women's movement to be effective in intervening to advance the interests of women and make positive legislative changes to develop a constitution based on principles of equality. Feminist issues should not be separated from political and national issues. She informed participants that a women's bill of rights had been prepared based on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She called upon the international community, in particular the ICCP, to encourage and direct the path of Palestinian nation-building by promoting decentralization of funding to enhance the Palestinian NGO network and by promoting equal partnership between men and women in order to develop a society based on values of justice and equality.

Panel V. Building the NGO network - NGO strategies for action

64. Mr. Fathi Darwish, Director in the Ministry of International Cooperation and Planning of the Palestinian Authority, emphasized the importance of the ongoing peace process for the Palestinian people and criticized the delays in the implementation of the agreements because of the policies of the Israeli Government. He said that Palestinian, Arab and international NGOs had played a tremendous role in strengthening the perseverance of the Palestinian people. Their work had been predominantly political, but they had also contributed to the economic and social development of the people. With the Palestinian Authority in place, the role of the NGOs had changed and a shift was required from a strategy of steadfastness and resistance to a constructive strategy for integrated and coordinated development. NGOs should reassess their role and review their programmes in order to adapt them to the new situation by contributing to the nation-building process.

65. Palestinian NGOs should play a role complementary to that of the Palestinian Authority, while acting in complete independence of its official organs. They could be entrusted with major responsibilities for the overall development of the Palestinian society within the framework set by the Palestinian Authority. Listing priorities for NGO work, Mr. Darwish said that besides the work for economic and social development, NGOs should develop means of defending land and property threatened by settlement activity, isolate the settlers and expose the dangerous character of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. NGOs should also devise effective means of defending Jerusalem. To that end, new coordinating mechanisms and organizational structures should be elaborated between Palestinian NGOs in order to coordinate their activities with the programmes of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, to coordinate the activities of Palestinian NGOs with those of the Israeli NGOs, and to develop relations between Palestinian and international NGOs. He stressed the importance of the role of NGOs in their own countries in supporting Palestinian economic development and urging their Governments to provide and maintain support to infrastructure programmes in the Palestinian territories.

66. Ms. Emma Murphy, lecturer in Middle Eastern politics at the University of Durham, United Kingdom, emphasized that two years after the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the sheer scale of the poverty and deprivation that the Palestinian people in the occupied territory continued to endure required that all parties involved, including the international NGOs, reassess their policies, strategies and actions, taking into account the intolerably slow progress. A wait-and-see attitude was counter-productive. International NGOs should play a part in helping to put the peace process back on track by continuing their activities on the ground as well as serving as a bridge between the Palestinians and the international donors and between the Palestinian Authority, the international community and Israel. NGOs should increase their participation in the political sphere as much as possible.

67. Referring to the policies by the donor community, Ms. Murphy said that there was a temptation for donors to use international NGOs to channel money into the occupied territory and to bypass the Palestinian Authority. The temptation for the Palestinian Authority was to let NGOs continue providing as much as possible so as to be relieved of a portion of its financial burden. Donors should not believe that political development would be automatic once they gave economic and social support. Without meaningful Israeli political concessions, direct and democratic national elections in the occupied territories, and the establishment of a politically legitimate, democratically elected Palestinian Government, any efforts at economic and social development would remain piecemeal.

68. Suggesting some guidelines for future action by international NGOs, Ms. Murphy stated that they should avoid becoming alternative channels for international donors to feed money into the occupied territory. Attempts to bypass the Palestinian Authority would delegitimize and devalue it. NGOs should strengthen the position of the Authority through cooperation and coordination, by offering advice and assistance when appropriate, keeping in mind that the Authority was the policy-making and decision-taking organ. International NGOs should make clear to their partners that their role is one of provision of relief and support for development initiatives led by the Palestinian Authority. NGOs needed also to voice their concern with regard to abuses of human rights and democratic freedoms by some powers within the Palestinian Authority that threaten any prospects for a democratic future for the Palestinians. They should support the democratic forces and publicize abuses with a view to supporting democratization rather than undermining the Palestinian Authority. NGOs should continually reassess their activities by aligning the Palestinian priorities and strategies with their own. NGOs were more than ever the eyes and ears of the international community in the occupied territory; extensive lobbying, information distribution and campaigning were required to raise public awareness worldwide.

69. Mr. José Elias, Chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile and President of the University of San Andres, said that the Chilean-Palestinian community, formed by

immigrants who arrived at the turn of the century and reinforced by further waves of immigrants in 1948, 1967 and 1973 and by their descendants, gradually emerged as the largest such community in Latin America, where the number of people of Palestinian origin was currently estimated at around 500,000. The Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile (FEPAL), a non-governmental organization, was formed in 1984 to represent the community of Palestinian immigrants and their descendants living in Chile, now numbering 200,000. FEPAL activities in Chile were consolidated and strengthened with the establishment of the Palestinian Confederation for Latin America and the Caribbean (COPLAC), also formed in 1984 at its first congress in Sao Paulo, which brought together all the Palestinian federations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Subsequently, the Latin American and Caribbean Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine was established.

70. Mr. Elias said that, in October 1994, the Government of Chile sent a fact-finding mission to the occupied territories. On 29 June 1995 at Tunis, it signed a memorandum of understanding with the PLO and the Palestinian Authority to promote action in support of the peace process, in the form of Chilean-Palestinian scientific, technical, cultural and social projects in the occupied territories. Private Chilean firms took the first steps to establish joint ventures with Palestinian industrial, service and commercial firms. FEPAL had encouraged those contacts and was playing a role in every sphere with a view to fostering new initiatives in soft technologies, tertiary production activities, education, health and social insurance. Also, ways were being found to raise money from private individuals to meet the requirements of the NGOs belonging to FEPAL. A Chilean-Palestinian foundation and fund-raising would be put in place this year. In view of those activities and their rationale, it was necessary to coordinate with the rest of Latin America so as to undertake larger-scale projects. There were resources that Latin America could provide at much lower cost than other countries of the world.

71. Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC), said that a few years ago, NACC had conducted a review and analysis of its work which had revealed two serious points of weakness: the problem of continuity and accountability, and the slow, steady erosion of its constituent base. In their interrelationship, the two problems led to disillusionment by the NGOs. At the same time, three positive factors were identified that helped sustain the NGOs' commitment: the Palestinian people and their Israeli allies continued to struggle and refused to succumb to despair; the basic principles that historically guided NGO work were re-examined and reaffirmed; and a diverse and highly motivated constituency had identified common ground, seeking ways and means to become more effective. The bi-national character of the NACC had become another source of strength. In 1995, 73 organizations participated in the North American Symposium in New York, and the NACC Steering Committee was strengthened by the election of two new organizations.

72. The Canadian Government remained actively involved in the refugee question, primarily through the multilateral working group. In addition, the Canadian Government remained committed to providing support for Palestinian NGOs through Canadian NGOs. In recent years, there had been an increase in the number and scope of Canadian NGO activities. They operated in a political environment that gave them more access to policy-makers and the media. In the United States, while there was a reduction in outright hostility on the part of the policy-makers and the media, attitudes remained less than favourable towards the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. Recently, the United States had vetoed a resolution in the Security Council and the Senate Majority leader had introduced legislation to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem. There was also a less well-known initiative supported by influential members of Congress, in both Houses, for the United States to make it more difficult or even impossible to give aid to or through the Palestinian Authority. In conclusion, he stressed the need for NGOs to improve information and communication, continuity and accountability and to develop more effective cooperation. Those efforts should go together with continued material aid and programmes and with efforts at influencing policy-makers. NGOs should become more resourceful with fewer resources.

IV. CLOSING STATEMENTS

73. **Mr. John Gee**, of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding and newly-appointed Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, said that the meeting had given a new impetus for reconstituting the European Coordinating Committee. The ECCP office in Brussels would be reopened and a pan-European plan on Palestine-related issues was being developed for the following year.

74. **Mr. Don Betz**, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, said that the relatively low attendance at the meeting should not be construed as lack of interest on the part of non-governmental organizations. This time of flux presented an opportunity for new resolve and growth. He expressed the hope that the joint United Nations and non-governmental organization-sponsored meeting would take place next year in Jerusalem.

75. **Mr. Ibrahim Ayad**, President of the Palestine Committee for NGOs, said that existing United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine stopped short of establishing a mechanism for implementation. Despite four years of the United States-sponsored peace process, Palestinians had seen no improvement in their situation. The Israeli Army was still in the West Bank and Gaza, thousands of Arab detainees were still being held, access to Jerusalem was denied, and Arab homes continued to be demolished while Jewish settlements were increasing daily in and around Jerusalem.

76. **Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the frank and constructive debate during the course of the meeting indicated that NGOs remained committed to a just and lasting solution to the Palestine question based on internationally accepted principles and United Nations resolutions. The speakers and contributors had reminded those present of the urgency of a satisfactory solution to the question of settlements, prisoners, refugees and the status of Jerusalem. Strengthening the Palestinian economy and improving living conditions had also emerged as urgent concerns. The Committee would continue to cooperate with NGOs in the future, promoting common objectives.

ANNEX I

Message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority

On the occasion of the twelfth International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting, I have the pleasure of sending to you, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Palestinian people, our best greetings and sincere congratulations to all of you, participants, friends and guests, and of wishing your distinguished meeting a successful outcome. I avail myself of this opportunity to highly commend the role played by the United Nations, under the leadership of its Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in supporting the just struggle of our Palestinian people for their freedom, independence and national sovereignty.

I would like to thank, in particular, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations for their role and efforts at official and popular levels to assist our people and help them to retrieve and exercise their inalienable national rights. Allow me, at this juncture, to express our deep gratitude to the President, Government and people of the friendly Republic of Austria for their continuous and significant support for our people and the National Palestinian Authority in their efforts to build and develop their homeland and establish a just peace in Palestine.

This is an important opportunity to proudly commend the solidarity efforts and activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations at all levels for the provision of all forms of support and assistance to the Palestinian people in their just and legitimate struggle to achieve their national goals and aspirations. In the important and decisive phase that we are now undergoing, we are in the greatest need of your continued and increased support for and solidarity with our Palestinian people in order to help them end their occupation, establish their State, develop their homeland and build its vital amenities and national institutions so as to consolidate the organs and structures of the National Palestinian Authority in order to stabilize and enhance the just and permanent peace that we all seek and that we all endeavour to establish in Palestine and in the region as a whole.

We also look forward to your efforts and activities with the distinguished Governments of your countries with a view to renewing and reconfirming their important and effective support for the National Palestinian Authority by exerting pressure on the Government of Israel and convincing it to hasten the implementation of the Declaration of Principles Agreement, providing for a redeployment of Israeli armed forces out of all Palestinian towns, villages and camps in the West Bank, with the handing of the remaining responsibilities and functions to the National Palestinian Authority and the release of all Palestinian prisoners and political detainees from Israeli prisons so as to pave the way for freely conducting Palestinian legislative elections at the earliest possible time under international supervision.

You no doubt realize the magnitude of the difficulties that we face, whether at the level of ongoing negotiations with the Israeli side for implementing the second half of the Declaration of Principles or at the level of building and developing our homeland, a phase that requires huge and continuous efforts and capacities to realize its objectives.

At the level of peace negotiations with the Israeli side, we have repeatedly confirmed, as you know, and we now reconfirm, that the road of peace is the strategic choice made by our people. More than ever before, we are determined to persist on this long and difficult road so as to establish together, on strong and sound foundations, with the support of all our friends and all freedom-, peace- and democracy-loving forces in the world, the peace that we aspire to, a just and equitable peace able to deal with all circumstances and situations with one set of standards. It is now almost two years since the Declaration of Principles was signed, yet little of the Agreement

has been implemented. We still have a lot to do in order to fully and faithfully implement the letter and spirit of the Agreement.

Most unfortunately, however, huge obstacles in the way of the peace process are still being created, under various arguments and pretexts, by the forces that still dream of creating Greater Israel and non-recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people, as well as by external forces opposed to the peace process. We believe that such obstacles constitute an optimum climate and a fertile ground for nurturing terrorism on both fronts, the Palestinian and the Israeli. Consequently, the negotiation process is oscillating under the influence of various actions and subject to dangerous reactions, all contributing to the destruction and subversion of the very basis of the peace process.

Peace is peace. Frivolousness, manoeuvring, procrastination and delay in the way to peace encourage the enemies of peace to continue their acts of violence and terrorism in order to disrupt and thwart the peace process. We believe that, since we have all accepted that peace should be our primary, decisive and final choice, there is no alternative to accelerating the peace process and intensifying negotiations. Only that is capable of pulling off the ready-to-go fuse of violence and terrorism on both fronts, aborting this blind and insane fanaticism and establishing and consolidating on the land in which we live together a mechanism for peaceful coexistence and cooperation that ensures our children and their children a safe, stable and prosperous future. In this connection, we applaud the constructive and positive role of peace forces in Israel and call upon such forces to activate their role and intensify the activities and efforts that they undertake jointly with us with a view to accomplishing the peace that we all aspire to and realizing that bright future.

I would like to call, through your meeting, upon all friends and all peace- and justice-loving forces and organizations on our planet to increase and activate their support for and assistance in the efforts of the Palestinian National Authority so that we can establish the peace that should enable our Palestinian people to end the Israeli occupation of their territories and holy places, retrieve and exercise their legitimate national rights, most prominently their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and find a just solution to the refugee problem. Such a peace would also ensure to all peoples and States in the region, including the State of Israel, security, stability, progress and prosperity.

With respect to the construction and redevelopment phase that we entered upon our arrival in our homeland, one of the most important obstacles to the continuity and expansion of this stage is Israeli occupation and the various impediments, restrictions and limitations that it places on the provision of the materials and equipment required for accelerating the process of reconstruction and development of a completely ruined homeland and for this process to assume all its developmental, social and economic dimensions. Thus, any assistance we receive in this process will contribute towards mitigating the heavy burdens on our shoulders as well as towards relieving the suffering and pains of our people and supporting their continuous efforts to build their homeland and realize the future they aspire to, a future in which every Palestinian child can live in freedom, security and peace.

ANNEX II

Communiqué

1. We, the non-governmental organizations gathered together at the United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, note with pride and appreciation on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations the important work done by the United Nations and its agencies, in particular, UNRWA, in addressing the question of Palestine.

2. We are aware that this is an important moment in the history of the Palestinian people. The Declaration of Principles opened a new chapter in Middle East relations. We welcome the positive developments in the Middle East peace process as a result of that historic development. But we also note with great concern the repeated delays in the implementation of the letter and spirit of the agreement. Those actions on the part of Israel have undermined confidence and generated insecurity among Palestinians and pose a genuine threat to the securing of a just and lasting peace. As NGOs we exhort Israel to honour its commitments in a timely manner. In addition, as NGOs, we continue to uphold the principle that Israel, as the occupying power, remains obligated to observe the Fourth Geneva Convention until such time as the Palestinian people achieve full sovereignty.

3. NGO unequivocal support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the right of return and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions remains at the center of the NGO commitment. The United Nations has a role in reaching a negotiated settlement on the question of Palestine and is the most appropriate body to guarantee a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

4. To demonstrate our commitment to peace and solidarity with Palestinians on the ground, we recommend that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in cooperation with NGOs in Palestine and the global NGO network through the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) and its regional coordinating bodies, convene a United Nations-sponsored NGO meeting in Jerusalem or another location in Palestine next year.

5. Although resolution of the questions related to Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and the right of return has been deferred to the permanent status negotiations, we NGOs clearly reaffirm their fundamental importance to any just and lasting peace. We oppose all Israeli actions designed to predetermine the final outcome of the talks.

6. We call upon all NGOs to make concerted efforts to publicize Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights. Of continuing and major concern to us is the ongoing Israeli incarceration of Palestinian political prisoners and detainees. We reiterate our call for their unconditional release in compliance with relevant agreements reached between Israel and Palestine. Further, we declare that NGOs have an obligation to lobby Governments regarding these concerns.

7. We note with great concern the closure and intimidation of Palestinian institutions. We condemn this dangerous action and call upon all NGOs to register their strongest protests with their Governments and with the Government of Israel.

8. We request that the countries hosting Palestinian refugees observe and preserve their civil, social and political rights until they are allowed to return home. We call upon all NGOs to seek new ways and means of aiding Palestinian refugees in these areas. Specifically, we call for cooperation and coordination among Palestinian grass-roots organizations by means of regional seminars and workshops.

9. We express our appreciation for the May 1995 meeting held in Jerusalem in preparation for this United Nations-sponsored meeting, organized by the Vienna Conference Working Group and attended by local and international NGOs in Palestine. The NGO Working Group meeting in Palestine is an indication of the seriousness and importance that NGOs accord to their collective work in cooperation with the United Nations. We welcome and encourage those efforts.

10. The local NGO movement in the occupied territories has a unique history. It has formed an essential part of the national struggle against the occupation, aimed at achieving Palestinian national goals. Under occupation, both local and international NGOs have played crucial roles in the development of the Palestinian economy and society. During the past year, Palestinian NGOs have affirmed their intention to continue playing those important roles. Strengthening Palestinian NGOs will ensure the development of civil society in Palestine. We will seek new ways to increase the involvement of international NGOs, including those involved in economic and social development and in humanitarian service. We encourage cooperation and coordination between Palestinian NGOs and the Palestinian Authority in order to fulfil the needs of the people. Donor agencies and nations are urged to fulfil their pledges and commitments to support Palestinian economic and social development.

11. We firmly believe that Israeli-Palestinian NGO cooperation should be encouraged and strengthened. This should be based on mutual understanding and commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. This cooperation is important to the Palestinian quest for self-determination. Concerted efforts should be made to enhance a process of coordination between Israeli and Palestinian NGOs.

12. We strongly denounce the continuous acts of harassment by Israel. Such actions include hampering the ability to deliver needed supplies, materials and medical necessities, and are examples of the multiple and persistent restrictions Israel adopts to disrupt the work of international and Palestinian NGOs and the daily life of Palestinians in general.

13. Further, we denounce the Israeli policy of closing East Jerusalem. We urge the Government of Israel to lift the closure immediately.

14. NGOs request the international community, and particularly the European Community and the United States, to urge Israel to comply with all phases of the Oslo Agreement. In particular, Israel should open four roads with at least one safe passage to link Gaza with the West Bank. The free movement of goods and peoples between Gaza and the West Bank is vital to the social and economic development of the areas under Palestinian jurisdiction. Specifically, we request that the shortest route, Gaza-Ashkelon-Idna-Hebron, be designated as the safe corridor to link Gaza with the West Bank.

15. The ICCP and ECCP plan to use the coming year as an opportunity to appraise the ways and means they can be most effective in assisting the Palestinian people in realizing their national aspirations. We will review our objectives, structures and processes as well as our working relationships with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights. We anticipate using multiple technologies to enhance our coordinating and information gathering and disseminating functions.

16. We warmly thank the Committee for convening this combined meeting and symposium. We genuinely appreciate the work done by the Division and the conference staff in facilitating our sessions. We acknowledge and appreciate the messages of support from Chairman Yasser Arafat and Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali as presented by their representatives. We further appreciate the statements supporting the NGO movement and activities made by the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, and by Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa of Palestine. We reaffirm our interest in continuing and expanding NGO cooperation with the Committee and the

Division. We request the Committee's and Division's assistance in gaining access to other United Nations bodies and agencies and in identifying United Nations programmes and resources that can help the NGOs fulfil their objectives.

17. We request the Chairman of the Committee to convey this communiqué to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session as part of the Committee's report.

ANNEX III

Workshop Reports

Workshop I. Economic and social development

Chair: Ms. Maria Ghazi
Rapporteur: Mr. John Gee
Resource person: Mr. Taysir Arouri, professor of physics and mathematics, Bir Zeit University;
member of the Palestine National Council

Mr. Taysir Arouri introduced the topic, speaking about the impact of Israeli occupation, which had set back Palestinian development. He suggested that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations should be refocused to end the occupation and implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967), giving the Palestinians control over land, water and natural resources. Establishing democracy was required to create a suitable atmosphere for investment; that included the rule of law, suitable regulations, civil rights and democracy. A comprehensive plan to tackle all aspects of social and economic development should be developed.

The following suggestions were made in the subsequent discussion:

- Less emphasis should be placed on attracting Palestinian investment and more upon providing the conditions which would prove attractive to any investors, foreign partners working with Palestinians should exert pressure upon Israel to desist from placing obstacles in the way of Palestinian economic development;
- The economic relations between Israel and its Palestinian neighbours should be revised. The customs union agreed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority gives Israel a grip on the Palestinian economy and prevents the Palestinians from making use of any comparative advantages which they have. Access for Palestinian labour to jobs in Israel for a minimum period of years should be guaranteed;
- Scholarships for Palestinian students abroad should be secured abroad, but these need to be adapted very strictly to the development needs of the Palestinians;
- The emergence of the institutions of democracy and a healthy civil society should be supported. NGOs should be consistent in championing basic human rights now as in the past. The presence of international observers for the duration of the forthcoming electoral process should be secured;
- NGOs should continue to convince their Governments to put pressure upon Israel regarding the restrictions it places upon Palestinian trade and the free movement of Palestinian labour.

Workshop II. Violations of human rights under Israeli Occupation

Chair: Mr. Larry Ekin, NACC
Rapporteur: Mr. Paul E. Hoffman, ECCP
Resource person: Dr. Ilan Gull, Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights

Dr. Gull introduced the topic, concentrating on medical human rights and focusing on the present situation and future prospects.

The following suggestions were made in the subsequent discussion:

- NGO human rights work should concentrate on the issues of Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, boundaries;
- NGOs should concentrate on the fact that national political rights are still being denied to the Palestinian people; individual property rights of Palestinians are being violated; the annexation of Palestinian land to the State of Israel was illegitimate; the nature of the "unified city" of Jerusalem was discriminatory in favour of the Israeli Jewish population; and repeated "closure" of the territories had affected the Palestinian health institutions in Jerusalem;
- NGOs should concentrate on Jerusalem, pointing out the social and humanitarian effects of cutting off East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied territories;
- More information had to be shared, particularly on medical human rights. More advocacy work had to be done. Cooperation between international and Palestinian NGOs had to be strengthened;
- NGOs should mount information and advocacy campaigns focusing on Israeli violations of medical human rights. These should be aimed at encouraging Israel to eliminate restrictions on such matters as the transfer of patients needing treatment outside Gaza or the West Bank and the training of medical personnel;
- NGOs should involve more medical professionals in human rights issues, particularly efforts aimed at dissuading Israeli doctors, psychiatrists and other medical professionals from participating in the oppression of the Palestinian people;
- Information and advocacy campaigns should be maintained and strengthened that emphasize the continued applicability of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, to the situation in the territories under Israeli occupation;
- NGOs should initiate, support and maintain programmes of human rights education involving the widest possible spectrum of Israeli and Palestinian society;
- NGOs should affirm the universality of principles of fundamental human rights, and should also affirm that attention to human rights issues and violations cannot be selective. At the same time, NGOs should remain mindful of the overall context in which human rights abuses take place. For the sake of their own integrity and credibility, NGOs need to address the Israeli Government as well as the Palestinian Authority. NGOs might be encouraged to help publicize positive examples of the Palestinian Authority responding to or correcting problems, and NGOs could help support and publicize human rights initiatives of the Palestinian Authority.
- NGOs should continue to concentrate on basic principles and unresolved issues, particularly as they relate to human rights concerns.

Workshop III. Palestinians in the diaspora

Chair/Rapporteur: Ms. Luisa Sirvent
Resource person: Mr. Elia Zureik, professor of sociology, Queen's College, Ontario, Canada;
member of the Palestinian delegation to the refugee working group of the
multilateral peace talks

Mr. Elia Zureik introduced the topic, stressing that half of the Palestinian population lived outside of historical mandated Palestine and that the trend for the year 2012 would remain the same. He said that Palestinian refugees living in the Arab world should be protected internationally under international law. He suggested that the issuance of Palestinian passports to refugees might facilitate the application of residence permits and visas by Palestinian refugees.

The following proposals for action were made during the discussion:

- There should be a public awareness campaign on the situation of Palestinian refugees, involving the coordinating efforts of ICCP, ECCP and NACC among their various constituencies. The campaign should mobilize Palestinians in the diaspora;
- International NGOs should support development projects for Palestinians in areas where the Palestinian Authority cannot effectively intervene, e.g., Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic;
- Possible funding sources through the European Union should be explored;
- NGO interest in the Palestinian issue should be reactivated to increase coordination among NGO activities and the flow of relevant information in a timely manner.

**Workshops IV and V. Combined workshops on Palestinian/Israeli cooperation*
and interaction of national and international NGOs and the role
of the NGO coordinating committees****

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Chair/Rapporteur: | Ms. Muna Kaldawi-Killingback |
| Resource persons: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Zakariah Odeh, Centre for the Dissemination of Alternative Information (PANORAMA), JerusalemMr. Latif Dori, Secretary of the Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue• • Mr. Don Betz, Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of PalestineMs. Maria Gazi, Acting Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of PalestineMr. John Gee, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British UnderstandingMr. Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of PalestineMr. José Elias, Chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile; President of the University of San Andres. |

The presentation and the discussion focused on the following proposals:

- Cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs needed to be expanded;
- Continued NGO solidarity with the Palestinian people was needed in seeking their political rights;
- NGOs needed to lobby their Governments to pressure Israel to fully implement the Declaration of Principles, and they also needed to lobby the Government of Israel;
- Next year's United Nations-NGO meeting should be held in Gaza;
- Israeli NGOs should increase their efforts to pressure their own Government to fully implement the Oslo Agreement, including cessation of Israel's policies of settlement expansion, land confiscation and closures of Jerusalem. A meeting will be organized with Palestinian and Israeli NGOs to discuss: cooperative efforts in the political sphere in order to support the establishment of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, with West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; the evacuation of settlements; solution of the refugee problem on the basis of United Nations resolutions; and the full implementation of the Oslo Agreements and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

ANNEX IV

List of participants and observers

NGO participants

AFRO-ASIAN PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION
ARAB LAWYERS UNION
ARAB ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ARAB STUDIES SOCIETY
ASSOCIATION OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
BERLINER MISSIONSWERK
DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR PEACE AND EQUALITY
FEDERACION PALESTINA DEL PERU
FOUNDATION FRIENDS OF NAZARETH
FRIENDS OF PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES
GENERAL ARAB WOMEN FEDERATION
GENERAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS
GESELLSCHAFTSANALYSE UND POLITISCHE BILDUNG e.V.
GREEK COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY
INDO-ARAB ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS ORGANIZATION
ITALIAN CENTER FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
LABOUR MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL
MALAYSIA-PALESTINE SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION
MEDICAL AID FOR PALESTINIANS
PALESTINE COMMITTEE OF NORWAY
PALESTINIAN GENERAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS
SAALAM RAGAZZI DELL' OLIVO
SPANISH NGO COMMITTEE ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

UNION OF PALESTINIAN MEDICAL RELIEF COMMITTEES

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF SWEDEN

WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATION

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

WORLD YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

NGO observers

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL AID

ARAR COORDINATING COMMITTEE

ART AND BUSINESS FRAUENPLATTFORM

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORLD REFUGEE PROBLEM

AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

FUNDACION CODESPA

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY AND COOPERATION

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS

NORWEGIAN PERFORMANCE

THE PACIFIST MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

PALESTINIAN AMERICAN CONGRESS

PALESTINIAN ASSOCIATION FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING

PALESTINIAN YOUTH UNION

PARTY OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

SOZIALE HILFSORGANISATION FÜR DIE PALÄSTINENSER

UNION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

UNITED HOLY LAND FUND

WORLD VETERANS FEDERATION

YOUNG MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND

Panelists and workshop resource persons

Khaled Abdel Shafi, Senior Liaison Officer, United Nations Development Programme, Jerusalem

Zakaria Abderahim, Director-General, Department for Returnee Affairs, PLO, Tunis

Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Taysir Arouri, professor of physics and mathematics, Bir Zeit University; member of the Palestine National Council, West Bank

Haim Baram, journalist, Kol ha-Ir, Jerusalem weekly; founding member, Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Tel Aviv

Don Betz, Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Abdulwahab Darawshe, Chairman of the Arab Democratic Party; member of the Knesset

Fathi Darwish, Director, Ministry of International Cooperation and Planning, Palestinian Authority, West Bank

Latif Dori, Secretary of the Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue

Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, Washington, D.C.

José Elias, Chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile; President of the University of San Andres

Maria Gazi, Acting Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

John Gee, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, London

Ilan Gull, Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights, Tel Aviv

Eileen Kuttub, lecturer in sociology and anthropology and coordinator of the Women's Studies Programme at Bir Zeit University

Hashem Mahameed, Head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality; member of the Knesset

Ibrahim Matar, Deputy Director, American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), East Jerusalem

Emma C. Murphy, lecturer in Middle Eastern politics, University of Durham, United Kingdom, Council for the Advancement of Arab British Understanding

Maher Nasser, External Relations and Project Officer, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Zakariah Odeh, Centre for the Dissemination of Alternative Information (PANORAMA), Jerusalem

Victor Possouvalioug, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Moscow

George B. Sahhar, Director of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education, Palestinian Authority

Azmi Shuib, Minister of Sports and Youth, Palestinian Authority

Imad S. A. Tarawiyeh, Director-General, Ministry of Health, Palestinian Authority

Ilter Türkmen, Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Elia Zureik, professor of sociology, Queen's College, Ontario, Canada; member of the Palestinian delegation to the refugee working group of the multilateral peace talks

Coordinating committees for NGOs on the question of Palestine

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FOR NGOS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Don Betz

EUROPEAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FOR NGOS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Maria Gazi
Anne Sunde

NORTH AMERICAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FOR NGOS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Larry Ekin

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COORDINATING
COMMITTEE FOR NGOS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

José Ferreyra

PALESTINE COMMITTEE FOR NGOS
Jordan
Gaza

Ibrahim Ayad
Marai Abdelrahman
Halevi Ilan

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 and Head of the Delegation

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. Alyaksandr Sychou
Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations

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

Governments

Afghanistan
Algeria
Argentina
Austria
Belarus
Belgium
Cambodia
China
Chile
Colombia
Cyprus
Egypt
France
Germany
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Japan
Jordan
Mexico
Netherlands
Nigeria
Norway
Panama
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
South Africa
Senegal
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sudan
Sweden
Thailand
Turkey
United States of America
Zimbabwe

United Nations bodies and specialized agencies

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Year of the Family (secretariat), Vienna

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Office at Vienna

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

World Food Programme

World Health Organization

Intergovernmental organizations

Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee

League of Arab States

Organization of the Islamic Conference

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

Palestine

Faisal Aweida
Permanent Observer, United
Nations Office at Vienna
Mohieddin Massoud
Alternate Permanent Observer

Hamed M. Shalash, First Secretary

Caroline Khalaf, Director, International
Relations, Ministry of Youth,
Palestinian Authority

