



**DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS**

**UNITED NATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING  
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

**Cairo  
25 and 26 April 1998**

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## I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at Cairo, from 25 to 26 April 1998.
2. The meeting was convened in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 52/49 and 52/50 of 9 December 1997. It was attended by 11 panelists and workshop resource persons, and by representatives of 78 non-governmental organizations, 20 of which participated as observers. It was also attended by the representatives of 35 Governments, a delegation of Palestine, representatives of 7 United Nations bodies and agencies and 3 intergovernmental organizations and 5 NGO coordinating committees.
3. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation composed of Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and Head of Delegation; Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; George Saliba (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Martin Andjaba (Namibia); and M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).
4. The programme of the meeting was formulated by the Committee taking into account suggestions made by the Chairman and other members of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP). The central theme of the meeting was "The question of Palestine: the international responsibility 50 years later".
5. At the opening session, a statement was made by Sayed Abu Zied, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt; a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was delivered by his representative, the Under-Secretary-General and United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. Mr. Ka spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. A statement was made by Mohamed M. Sobeih, Permanent Representative of Palestine to the League of Arab States and representative of Palestine at the Meeting. The opening session heard also a statement by Don Betz, Chairman of ICCP.
6. The experts invited to the Meeting made presentations in two panels, which were followed by a discussion. In the first panel, on the theme "The international responsibility 50 years later", speakers addressed the historical consequences of political developments since the adoption of the resolution on partition; the recent political developments in the peace process; and the need for international protection and support of the Palestinian people. Presentations were made by Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Director of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem; Khaled Muhie Al-Dein, Member of the Egyptian Parliament; Zahava Galo'n, Board Member of Meretz; and Ahmad Saad, Member of the Knesset.
7. The second panel focused more specifically on issues of concern to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Under the general theme "NGO support for international efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine", participants discussed NGO action to apply international instruments with regard to the question of Palestine, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (also known as the Fourth Geneva Convention); as well as NGO campaigns against settlements and in favour of East Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian State. The speakers were: Fiona McKay, lawyer with Redress, a London-based NGO; Gabi Baramki, First Vice-President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace; Pierre Galand, Secretary-General of the Belgo-Palestine Association and Member of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP); K.M. Khan, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine; Victor Makari, Member of the North American Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (NACC); and Nouri Abdul Razzak Hussein, Secretary-General of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) and member of the African Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine.

8. In addition to the panels, two workshops were held for NGO participants. The first workshop focused on NGO action in support of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the second workshop discussed the cooperation with Palestinian and Israeli NGOs and the coordination of international campaigns.

9. The participating NGOs adopted a Final Statement, in which they reaffirmed the NGO plan of action adopted at the most recent International NGO Meeting in August 1997 held at Geneva.

## II. Opening statements

10. Sayed Abu Zied, Ambassador and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, representative of the host country, emphasized that peace was the strategic choice by the Arab States and that all negotiations should be based on the principles agreed at Madrid in 1991. The peace process was facing several stumbling blocks. He criticized the violations by Israel of the Fourth Geneva Convention and called for collective sanctions by the international community to restore compliance with international law. Non-governmental organizations should increase their efforts within their own countries to ensure support, by Governments and public opinion alike, of the peace process. At the same time, concrete projects were needed to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory.

11. In his message delivered at the meeting, the Secretary-General of the United Nations emphasized that NGOs played an invaluable role in supporting the objectives and activities of the United Nations. In his efforts to make the United Nations better respond to the social and economic ills affecting humankind, he had made it a priority to encourage NGO participation in all areas of work. He recalled that NGOs had been active in supporting the humanitarian and other work of the United Nations, in particular that of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). NGOs had played a crucial role in monitoring developments on the ground and in mobilizing international public opinion for a just and peaceful settlement. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had engaged NGOs in its work and had brought together Palestinian and Israeli NGOs and peace activists. He expressed confidence that the work with NGOs would acquire growing importance in the future work of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. In conclusion, he pledged the continuing support of the United Nations for the cause of peace. In view of the serious economic and social situation in the occupied territories, he would continue to mobilize the resources of the United Nations system to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people.

12. Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, emphasized that the serious stalemate in the Middle East peace process and the worsening prospects for the attainment of Palestinian national rights had aroused great concern at the United Nations, among Governments and intergovernmental organizations alike. He expressed the belief of the Committee that everything possible should be done to inject new momentum into the peace process, and stated that it had structured its own programme of work accordingly. It was evident that the involvement and commitment of concerned countries and groups of countries other than the co-sponsors of the peace process could play a very positive role in moving the process forward. He said that recent polls had suggested that the majority of Palestinians and Israelis were ready for reconciliation and in favor of a just peace, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the "land-for-peace" formula. On the other hand, the Government of Israel bore responsibility for the resumption of the policy of settlements and land confiscation, the unilateral measures to change the status of Jerusalem, and the repeated closures of the areas under the Palestinian Authority. Those actions had been unanimously condemned by the international community.

13. He pointed out that it was imperative to achieve respect for international law, to proceed with the full implementation of the agreements that had already been reached and to re-establish the spirit of mutual confidence and cooperation between the parties, so that negotiations could resume. He said that the role of NGOs in support of the Palestinian people was extremely important. They were an influential voice at the national level, they informed and shaped public opinion, and they represented the views of

their constituencies before policy-makers. Many NGOs had substantial assistance projects on the ground. All efforts should be intensified in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and for the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions.

14. Mohamed M. Sobeih, Permanent Representative of Palestine to the League of Arab States, representative of Palestine, pointed out that, historically, the Palestinians were a peace-loving people. Their goal was the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. He noted that Israel, while celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation, was destroying Palestinian homes, uprooting the Palestinian people, and seizing the Palestinian economy by refusing to open a safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza. The patience and flexibility demonstrated by the Palestinian leadership, and its offer of maximum cooperation in the field of security, was met with further intransigence by the Israeli Government and a stern refusal of further withdrawals from the occupied territory. He said that Israel was the only Power in the region with a nuclear arsenal. Under the prevailing circumstances, the Palestinian people was in need of real support from Governments and NGOs alike, in order to save the peace process. The requested Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention would be an important step in the right direction.

15. Don Betz, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, expressed appreciation for the holding of the International NGO Meeting, for the first time, in the Middle East region. He urged NGOs to get significantly involved in the search for a just peace in the Middle East. In view of the fiftieth anniversary of the State of Israel and the related media attention, he called upon NGOs to provide public opinion with an alternative perspective of history. General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which called for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, remained unfulfilled. NGOs should tell the story of the past 50 years, as seen and felt through the eyes and hearts of the Palestinian people. Those efforts must be coordinated and well-publicized in order to reach wider audiences in many countries. He called upon NGOs to work collectively and in a complementary fashion in order to offer the public, particularly in the United States of America and Europe, another version of that history. The United Nations should support those efforts and, together with NGOs, produce, disseminate and present updated videos and literature that present the question of Palestine to the first-time viewer and reader. He stressed that NGOs throughout the world, by closing ranks and acting in coordination, constituted an emerging force in the changing landscape of international politics.

### III. Plenary sessions

#### Plenary session I

#### Briefings on the current political situation

16. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Director of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs in Jerusalem, said that the struggle for Palestinian independence had lasted over 100 years and had started with the fight against the Ottoman Empire. The signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993 had marked, for the first time, the acceptance by the Palestinians of a two-State solution. It resulted in mutual recognition of the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples, which, on the Israeli side, had been backed only by the Labour Party and its supporters. He continued by describing the serious consequences of the policy of the Israeli Government for the peace process. He drew attention to the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the region and said that the growing involvement of the United Nations was very important, because its resolutions provided for a solution of the conflict. He also welcomed the increased political involvement of the countries of the European Union to save the peace process.

17. Khaled Muhie Al-Dein, Member of the Egyptian Parliament, said that the NGOs should determine who bore responsibility for the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the peace process. He gave a historic overview of events, starting with the adoption by the United Nations of the partition resolution, which had remained unfulfilled and had led to the creation of only the State of Israel. He said that Israel had not been satisfied with the amount of land given and had started soon thereafter with the annexation of additional Palestinian land. He recalled the phase of Israeli terror that had led to

the assassination of many Palestinian leaders. Israel had constantly ignored international legitimacy and did not implement crucial resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). He described the stalemate on all tracks of the negotiations, bilateral and multilateral, and condemned the decision by the current Israeli Government to replace the principle "land for peace" by "peace for security". He concluded that the prospects for a just settlement of the question of Palestine within the agreed time frame were rather bleak.

18. Zahava Galo'n, Board Member of the Meretz party in Israel, said that the Government of Prime Minister Netanyahu had opted to undermine the Oslo process by creating an atmosphere of hostility and mistrust, setting up additional barriers to peace and blaming the Palestinians for the stalemate in the process. The actions by the Government had led Israel back to the era of 'Great Eretz' Israel, provoking frustrations among Palestinians and many Israelis alike. She said that Mr. Netanyahu's policies demonstrated that he preferred to preserve his governing coalition rather than advancing the peace negotiations with the Palestinians. That increased the danger of a new war in the Middle East, the contraction of Israel's economy and the return to a state of international isolation. She pointed out that one of the obstacles created by the Israeli Government was the expansion of the settlements, with the number of settlers in 2000 expected to be 220,000, double the number in 1993, when the Oslo process had started. She said that settlements were illegal, counterproductive to any attempt at reconciliation with the Palestinians and must be evacuated. Another major obstacle was the creation of new geographic and demographic realities in Jerusalem to prevent any just solution of the future status of that city, which, in her view, should be based on dual sovereignty, Israeli and Palestinian. She criticized the 'silent expulsion' of Arabs from East Jerusalem by legalistic means, in order to maintain the Jewish majority in the city. In conclusion, she called upon the Israeli Left and the peace supporters to mobilize Israeli society to put pressure on the Government to uphold the international agreements it had concluded, to implement the withdrawals from the West Bank, to begin the permanent settlement talks and to halt the construction of settlements in East Jerusalem.

19. Ahmed Saad, Member of the Knesset, stressed the need for the NGOs in the Middle East to become more active. More organization and cooperation were required between the NGOs in the Arab countries and with the Israeli peace forces. He said that the world was witnessing the dispossession of an entire people, and no possibility of return for many Palestinians. He stated that, for the Government of Prime Minister Netanyahu, peace was not a strategic option. Its policy was aimed at breaking the territorial integrity of the West Bank, thus rendering a viable Palestinian state impossible. NGOs should exert pressure on their respective Governments, using national and international forums, in order to help international legitimacy prevail. The international actions taken against Iraq had demonstrated the possibilities of the international community. He called upon the European countries to stand up for their own political positions and not merely to support economically the policy of the United States of America. In order to activate cooperation among NGOs in the Middle East region, he suggested the establishment of an NGO centre on the question of Palestine at Cairo.

#### Plenary session II

#### NGO support for international efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine

20. Fiona McKay, a lawyer and staff member of Redress, a London-based NGO, emphasized that international human rights law and international humanitarian law remained applicable for as long as the occupying Power retained jurisdiction over the occupied territory. The Oslo agreements did not alter that situation, since article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention made it clear that an agreement between an occupying Power and the people under occupation would not automatically end the applicability of the Convention. The Palestinians still required the protection of humanitarian law, and they were entitled to it by law. Israel continued to exercise jurisdiction in the occupied territories, it retained veto power over all Palestinian legislation and retained control over infrastructure, water and movement. She stressed that, at the same time, Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights and the imposition of collective penalties continued. The closures violated international humanitarian and human rights law in many respects. Israel

had the legal duty to balance its own security needs against the obligation to ensure the welfare of the occupied population, ensuring access to food, medical care and work. Also, Israel legalized torture in defiance of international law. She then elaborated on the obligations of State parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Convention against Torture and said that Governments had so far failed to display the political will to implement the relevant clauses of those instruments. She said that the European Union had chosen to make its relations with non-member States, including Israel, conditional on their human rights record and the European Parliament had called for a procedure for binding steps to be taken in the event of human rights violations in third countries which have an agreement with the European Union. In relation to Israel, the European Union had so far failed to display the political will to implement this clause.

21. She stressed that NGOs could play an important role in mobilizing public opinion on these issues and in pressing their Governments to implement them. Putting injustice into an international legal framework, she said, could help NGOs fight in two ways: first, by providing a standard by which to criticize, and second, by taking advantage of the enforcement mechanisms that it provided. Citing concrete examples, she concluded that NGOs were the only actors that could hold Governments responsible and accountable under international law. They could make the connections between their Government's obligations and the violations that were taking place, and point out their role in enforcement. NGOs were a bridge between the Palestinian community and their respective countries, the conduit of information to mobilize political parties, professional associations, unions and the media. Many NGOs had been mobilized against the closures, raising the issue in international human rights bodies, marshalling information by international NGOs with a presence in the region. That pressure had to be continued and increased.

22. Gabi Baramki, First Vice-President of the Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace, said that Israel and the international community should recognize that settlements were a grave violation of international law. They were illegal and not just an obstacle to peace. He considered campaigns for a freeze of settlements or "time out" misleading, because they implied an acceptance of the facts on the ground. The key issue was not the halt of settlement activities, but the dismantling of those settlements. It was up to the Palestinians to determine the extent of the dismantling of settlements and what was to remain and what status they would have. He characterized the argument by Israeli officials that Jews should have the right to settle anywhere in Palestine as racist. It implied that the Palestinians had a sovereign State and they were not allowing Jews to settle in it. He also criticized the often repeated argument of Israel's security needs because, under its guise, Israel continued its illegal annexation or acquisition of land for colonization. Under that pretext, Israel had been allowed by the international community to commit atrocities, expropriate land, deport people individually or en masse, colonize the occupied land, close Jerusalem and dismember the occupied Palestinian territory. Peace and security for Israel would only be assured when the Palestinian people was allowed its own State with Jerusalem as its capital.

23. Baramki called upon the international community to state clearly to Israel that it was violating the Geneva Convention and other international treaties. Israel should be given a deadline for implementation of the Oslo agreements and Security Council resolution 242 (1967). A committee should be established to monitor Israeli compliance with international law, and the United Nations should be part of that monitoring process. If Israel did not comply, international action should start with a total ban of arms sales to Israel, continue with a freeze on all cultural and educational activities and, if necessary, economic sanctions should be imposed. At the same time, the international community should fight all forms of terrorism, and State terrorism in the first place, on the basis of a universally accepted definition of terrorism.

24. Pierre Galand, Secretary-General of the Belgo-Palestine Association and Member of ECCP, referred to the celebrations on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Israel and said that most of the media coverage was silent on the occupation of the Palestinian territory and the plundering of its natural resources, did not mention that Israel had violated the borders of all its neighbours and that it had developed nuclear, chemical and biological weapons beyond any international control. Israel was defying all United Nations decisions and was allowed to do so by the big Western Powers, the United States of America and the European countries. On behalf of ECCP, he encouraged the Committee on the

Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to pursue its mandate in the interests of the establishment of a Palestinian State, the implementation of the right to return or to compensation, and the release of all political prisoners. He reported that in France, Greece, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Spain and Belgium, NGOs had formed national platforms in order to pursue more effectively support for the Palestinian people. Effective networks were also necessary to keep public opinion informed, and to keep a constant pressure on the Governments and European institutions, as well as parliamentarians, to support the Palestinian cause. In his assessment, the European NGO network of solidarity with the Palestinians had been reformed and strengthened, partially also because of the intransigence of the current Israeli Government whose policies were being increasingly criticized by European public opinion, including Jewish inhabitants. In conclusion, he suggested that the United Nations should form a peacekeeping force to replace the Israeli army and police in the territory of future Palestinian State.

25. K.M.Khan, Member of the Indian Parliament and Chairman of the Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, recalled that General Assembly resolution 181 (II) would remain unfulfilled until the Palestinian State was established. He condemned the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and South Lebanon by Israel as a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The expansion of settlements in the West Bank and in Jerusalem, in particular, on Jabal Abu Ghneim, was the biggest obstacle to peace and constituted a threat to peace and security in the region. The fate of Jerusalem was a matter of deep concern to millions of people across the world because of its significance for three religions. The forthcoming celebrations of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ should give an additional impetus to turning Jerusalem into a city of peace, which would require the withdrawal of Israeli troops from its Arab sectors. He stressed that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine had always been an integral part of the historic struggle for freedom in Asia. Asian parliaments and individual parliamentarians could play a significant role in making the issue a focus of international efforts. The European Union and the European Parliament should strengthen their political role, in addition to increasing programmes of assistance to the Palestinian people. The United States of America and the Russian Federation should live up to their responsibilities as co-sponsors of the peace process and put pressure on Israel to implement the Oslo accords. In view of the deteriorating situation in the territories under the Palestinian Authority, he called upon the NGO community to extend generous assistance and to create a Palestine fund, along the lines of the Africa Fund, either under the aegis of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People or the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The forthcoming summit conference of non-aligned countries should provide new impetus from this influential political group for a just solution of the question of Palestine.

26. Victor Makari, Member of NACC, said that the question of Palestine was the longest single political issue on the American agenda, owing to the lack of political will on the part of successive administrations to effect a permanent solution, which appeared not to be in the interest of the United States. North American NGOs had been involved over many years in difficult periods of struggle to build and support grass-roots political movements. At present, he said, a large and informed constituency existed. The religious community, for example, had not only informed its members, but also urged them to take active roles in communicating with political leaders and challenging them to enact peace with justice. Official statements, articles, booklets, other study materials and paid advertisements, newsletters, information packets, fact-finding delegations, dialogue groups and meetings with political representatives, had been utilized to raise the level of consciousness and to deepen motivation for political action. He expressed the belief that a significant change of attitude on the part of the American people and North American Governments was due to those efforts. North American NGOs were organizing seminars, travel tours and programmes of material assistance to the Palestinian people. The NACC was publishing a quarterly newsletter, *Connections*, was working on a project to compile a history, and issued regular alerts for action through its *Fax Tree*. It launched campaigns against illegal settlements, raised voices about Jerusalem, protested border closures and defended land and water rights. The greatest challenge, however, remained to change the basic policies of the Government of the United States of America towards the issue.



27. Nouri Abdul Razzak, Secretary-General of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, expressed concern with regard to the future of the peace process. The escalation of tensions in the Palestinian territory could lead to a very adverse situation in the whole region. He recalled some highlights of the past 15 years of the NGO movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people. He noted a serious demotion, in the past years, in the work of the NGOs, including the influence of ICCP; NGO activities were in particular diminished after the signing of the Oslo accords. In view of the serious situation of the peace process, NGOs should start looking to the future. He said that important international issues had never been solved by State negotiations alone; there was always the impact of mass action, and of public opinion, led mostly by NGOs. The ICCP, ECCP and the other coordinating committees, including the African Coordinating Committee, of which AAPSO held the chairmanship, must be activated again. The next meeting in Africa organized under the auspices of the Committee should contribute to that. He seconded the suggestion to create an NGO centre on the question of Palestine at Cairo to support ICCP, the Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, as well as groups in other Mediterranean countries.

#### IV. Closing statements

28. Don Betz, Chairman of ICCP, introduced the Final Statement of the Meeting and stressed that most of the recommendations for action contained in the final document of the previous meeting, held at Geneva in August 1997, remained valid and represented the plan for action by the NGO community for the months to come. He called upon all organizations to join in its implementation.

29. Aleya Abu Il Ezz, Director of the NGO Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, highlighted some concrete proposals put forward by NGOs during the Meeting and commended them for their contribution to the alleviation of the suffering of the Palestinian people and in assisting in the reconstruction of the Palestinian territory. She called for more decisive action by the international community in view of the deteriorating economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people and stated that the contributions to UNRWA needed to be increased. She expressed the support of the Government of Egypt for the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. The international community had to put an end to Israel's dangerous policies in suppressing the Palestinian people, otherwise the region would get pushed again into violence. She invited ICCP to submit to the Foreign Ministry its views regarding the establishment of an NGO centre on the question of Palestine at Cairo.

30. Nabil Shaat, Minister for Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestinian Authority, representative of Palestine, emphasized that the plan of action contained very concrete and constructive suggestions. He said that the long years of struggle had caused frustration among NGOs, as was the case with the policies of the current Israeli Government. He stressed that the question of Palestine was unique and worth every effort towards its solution. The actions by the present Israeli Government demonstrated that it was not committed to peace, namely, the consolidation of the occupation through settlements, the attempts to turn public opinion against the Palestinian Authority, and the reintroduction of ideological issues, thus threatening reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. NGOs would be able to contribute considerably towards dispersing the myths created by the Israeli Government in order to keep the concept of peace and reconciliation alive.

31. Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the Meeting, as the first International NGO Meeting held under the auspices of the Committee in the Middle East region, had contributed to the strengthening of contacts between the international NGOs and their Palestinian and Israeli counterparts. It had given new impetus to the joint efforts to win over public opinion in favour of a just solution of the question of Palestine and had encouraged new, concrete projects to assist the Palestinian people. He expressed the appreciation of the Committee for the efforts made by the NGOs for the Palestinian cause. He called upon the NGOs to do their utmost to implement the challenging plan of action adopted at Geneva in 1997 and reaffirmed by the Meeting. During the difficult period ahead for the peace process, the Palestinians needed, more than ever, to receive support and assistance in an organized and effective manner.

## ANNEX I

Final Statement

The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating in the United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at Cairo on 25 and 26 April 1998, note with satisfaction that the Meeting has been convened in the Middle East for the first time.

We urge serious consideration of holding additional NGO events in the region in 1999, in particular in Palestine. To ensure broad distribution and strong attendance, the NGOs are prepared to assist in its preparation and publicity, well in advance of the meeting.

We note that we have met in the fiftieth year of the dispossession of the Palestinian people and we honour all those who have suffered during this one-half century of injustice and occupation. We affirm that the question of Palestine is, fundamentally, about the struggle for land, and the fulfilment of the inalienable Palestinian right to establish, alongside Israel, an independent state with Al-Quds or East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Declaration of Principles, signed in September 1993, and most recently reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 52/52 of 9 December 1997, raised hope for stability and peace in the region. It is now almost five years later and it is clear that the policies of the present Israeli Government have undermined any confidence and trust in the current process. We call upon the Israeli Government to fully implement the Oslo agreements.

We remain committed to the full implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions as our common platform. We are deeply concerned that their non-implementation and the lack of meaningful progress in the negotiations is producing levels of despair and frustration among the Palestinian people which erodes hope and produces a climate for increased hostility. We believe that the situation on the ground in Palestine is very serious and cannot be ignored.

The United Nations and the international community have a continuing and unfulfilled responsibility for a just resolution of the question of Palestine. Prior to the full implement of United Nations resolutions on Palestine, we support the call for United Nations and international protection of the Palestinian people.

Meeting at Cairo, we have reviewed the NGO Plan of Action adopted in August 1997 at the previous International Meeting of Non-Governmental Organizations and find it to be relevant to our continuing work. We note that some progress has been made in specific areas of the plan, and we reaffirm our commitment to the plan as a common NGO plan of action. We urge all NGOs and the United Nations to cooperate in its implementation.

The NGOs reiterate their commitment to a just and lasting peace, based on self-determination for the Palestinian people. The objective of our efforts must be focused on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. In support of this goal, the NGOs once again declare their recognition of the State of Palestine in conformity with those announced by the Palestine National Council in its Declaration of Independence of 1988. We look to 1999 as the year of the State of Palestine and will work with our constituencies and the public to prepare them for the declaration of the independent State by the Palestine Authority.

We call upon all NGOs to undertake creative and informative ways of observing 15 May 1998. These commemorations should be shared with all NGOs through the regional committees and ICCP.

The NGO participants continue to support the initiatives of the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session and will urge their respective Governments to implement its resolutions, in particular with regard to the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and its enforcement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as the convening of a meeting of experts to prepare for the conference. In order to achieve these goals, NGOs should enlist the assistance of legal organizations in their respective States.

The NGOs assert that cooperation between Palestinians and Israeli NGOs is important to the securing of Palestinian rights. We encourage the Israeli NGOs to continue their efforts within Israeli society in building support for self-determination by the Palestinian people. Major efforts should be made to enhance the coordination between NGOs in Palestine and Israel and to build new bridges of contact and cooperation among Palestinian and Israeli NGOs.

The European NGOs will pursue their work of lobbying their national parliaments and Governments and the European Union institutions to suspend the Euro-Med and bilateral agreements as they relate to Israel until such time as Israel complies with all of its political and economic commitments signed with the Palestinian side. This includes a general boycott of goods produced in the Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.

The NGOs call for an interregional NGO working group composed of those organizations which focus on the law to assist other NGOs with the legal aspects of promoting self-determination by the Palestinian people and challenging Israel in its efforts to thwart this outcome. This should include a plan of action for the use of existing legal instruments and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian law.

We are encouraged by the NGO regional reports as presented during the Meeting. We will pursue the suggestions offered to utilize the facilities and assistance of NGOs based at Cairo as a liaison for networking.

The NGOs emphasize the importance of widely disseminating by every available means during 1998, information and publicity regarding Palestine. To that end, we call upon the United Nations, and in particular the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, to produce a professional video programme during 1998 on the issue of Palestine and the history of the Palestinian people in various languages and suitable for global viewing and distribution. The NGOs are ready to assist the United Nations in this project.

ICCP and the NGOs assembled for this International Meeting express their appreciation to the Government of Egypt for hosting the Meeting and to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat for their continuing assistance and cooperation.

## ANNEX II

Participants and observersNGO participants

Abna' Al Tira Association, Israel  
 African Alliance of YMCAs, Nairobi  
 Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, Cairo  
 Afro-Asian Writers Association, Cairo  
 Alternative Information Centre, Jerusalem  
 Arab Health Centre, Jerusalem  
 Arab Lawyers Union, Cairo  
 Asian Committee of Solidarity with Arabs, Pakistan  
 Association of the Mediterranean Region, Cyprus  
 Association of Women's Committee for Social Work, Ramallah  
 Belgo-Palestine Association, Brussels  
 Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, India  
 Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, Tel Aviv  
 Confédération générale italienne du travail, Rome  
 Daymi Complex, Bangladesh  
 Democratic Front for Peace and Equality in Israel, Tel Aviv  
 Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity, Athens  
 Holy Land Islamic Association, India  
 Indo-Arab Islamic Association, India  
 Indo-Arab League Hyderabad, India  
 Indo-Palestine Solidarity Organization, India  
 International Catholic Migration Commission, Geneva  
 International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, Damascus  
 International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Netherlands  
 International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Geneva  
 Lutfia Rabhani Foundation, Netherlands  
 Medical Aid for Palestinians, Amman  
 Medical Aid for Palestinians, London  
 Middle East Fellowship of Southern California, Burbank  
 Najdeh, Germany  
 National Foundation for Investment and Development, Israel  
 National Young Women Christian Association of Egypt, Cairo  
 Near East Foundation, Cairo  
 Neve Shalom - Wahat El-Selam, Israel  
 North South XXI Institute, Geneva  
 Palestine Red Crescent Society, Cairo  
 Palestine Red Crescent Society, New York  
 Palestine Trade Unions Federation, Tunis  
 Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Gaza  
 Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace, Jerusalem, Ramallah  
 Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center, Jerusalem  
 Palestinian Non-governmental Organization Network, Ramallah  
 Palestinian Pen Centre, Jerusalem  
 Palestinian Relief Committees, Gaza  
 Presbyterian Church, United States of America  
 Princeton Middle East Society, Princeton, United States of America  
 Social Development Committee, Haifa

Terre Des Hommes, Gaza (Ard El Insan - Palestine)  
 Terre Des Hommes, Jerusalem  
 Union of Local Associations of Unrecognized Villages in Israel  
 United Malays National Organization, Kuala Lumpur  
 United Nations Association for International Service, Jerusalem  
 World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Riyadh  
 World Muslim Congress, Islamabad  
 World Vision, Jerusalem  
 World Young Women's Christian Association, Geneva  
 YMCA of Egypt, Cairo  
 Young Women's Christian Association, Jerusalem

#### NGO observers

Agricultural Society - Al-Batif  
 Arab Coordination Center of NGOs, Cairo  
 Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region, Cyprus  
 Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Cairo  
 Church of Sweden, Cairo  
 First Ramallah Group, Ramallah  
 Galilee College, Israel  
 Ghana Muslim Mission, Accra  
 International Center for Peace in the Middle East, Tel Aviv  
 Omdurman Centre for Women's Studies, Cairo  
 Palestinian Committee for Social & Psychological Health, Cairo  
 Palestinian Democratic Youth Federation, Gaza  
 Redress, London  
 Sabeel Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem  
 Union inter-africain des avocats, Cairo  
 Union of Palestinian Women, Cairo  
 Union of Women's Action Committees, Gaza  
 Women Aid Society, Gaza  
 Workers Unity Block, Gaza  
 World Federation for Mental Health (Eastern Mediterranean Regional Council)

#### Panellists

Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi  
 Director, Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs

Nouri Abdul Razzak  
 Secretary-General, Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization

Gabi Baramki  
 First Vice-President, Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace

Pierre Galand  
 Secretary-General, Association Belgo-Palestine; Member, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

**Zahava Galo'n**  
Board Member of Meretz

**Allam Jarrar**  
Vice-President, Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace

**K.M. Khan**  
Chairman, Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

**Victor Makari**  
Member, North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

**Fiona McKay**  
Lawyer, Redress, London

**Khaled Muhie Al-Dein**  
Member of the Egyptian Parliament

**Ahmad Saad**  
Member of the Knesset (Democratic Israel)

**Coordinating Committees for NGOs on the Question of Palestine**

<b>African Coordinating Committee</b>	<b>Nouri Abdul Razzak</b>
<b>Asian Coordinating Committee</b>	<b>K.M. Khan</b>
<b>European Coordinating Committee</b>	<b>Pierre Galand</b>
<b>International Coordinating Committee</b>	<b>Don Betz</b>
<b>North American Coordinating Committee</b>	<b>Victor Makari</b>
<b>Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace</b>	<b>Gabi Baramki, Mar'ie Abdulrahman</b>
<b>Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue</b>	<b>Latif Dori</b>

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

**Ibra Deguène Ka**, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations; Chairman of the Committee and Head of Delegation

**Ravan A.G. Farhadi**, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations; Vice-Chairman of the Committee

**George Saliba**, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations; Rapporteur of the Committee

**Martin Andjaba**, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations

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

**Governments**

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Eritrea, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malta, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uganda, United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam

**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

**United Nations bodies and agencies**

United Nations Development Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Population Fund, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Universal Postal Union

**Intergovernmental organizations**

European Commission, League of Arab States, Organization of the Islamic Conference

ANNEX III

Membership of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs  
on the Question of Palestine, 1997-1998

Chair: Don Betz

African Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Arab Lawyers Union

Asian Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue

Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash)

European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Latin American and Caribbean Coordinating Committee for NGOs  
on the Question of Palestine

North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace

Palestinian NGO Network

World Young Women's Christian Association

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (1998/1999)

International Jewish Peace Union (1997/1998)

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