

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE REFUGEES

Headquarters of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris
29 and 30 April 2008

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees was held at the Headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris on 29 and 30 April 2008, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in keeping with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81.
2. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Paul Badji (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; Saviour F. Borg (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Rodrigo Malmierca-Díaz (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; and Riyadh Mansour (Palestine).
3. The Conference consisted of an opening session, three plenary sessions and a closing session. The themes of the plenary sessions were "Palestine refugees - the longest running humanitarian problem in today's world", "The United Nations and Palestine refugees" and "International and regional efforts to promote a solution of the Palestine refugee issue".
4. Presentations were made by 15 experts, including Palestinians and Israelis. Representatives of 93 Governments, the Holy See, Palestine, 5 intergovernmental organizations, 6 United Nations bodies and 25 civil society organizations, as well as special guests and representatives of the media, attended the Conference.
5. At the closing of the Conference, its Conclusions and Recommendations (see annex I) were taken note of by the participants (see annex II).

II. Opening session

6. In a message read out on his behalf by his representative Angela Kane, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said 2008 marked the sixtieth year of the Palestinians' dispossession; however, their desire or right to live a normal life in their own sovereign land remained undiminished, as did the individual and collective rights of Palestine refugees.
7. At Annapolis, the international community had come together to support efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli occupation, leading to the creation of a Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and eventually to a comprehensive regional peace. The negotiations under

way were the only way to address all permanent status issues, including that of the refugees, he stressed.

8. He commended President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert for remaining committed to reaching an agreement by the end of 2008, despite daily violence and other negative developments on the ground. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, checkpoints and the barrier imposed hardship on the Palestinians; Israeli settlements expanded and outposts remained in place; East Jerusalem was cut off from its West Bank hinterland. He urged the parties to implement their Phase I Road Map obligations, build popular confidence in the negotiations and comply with international humanitarian law.

9. He recalled that the United Nations provided assistance to approximately 75 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip. He therefore welcomed efforts to end to rocket fire and other attacks against Israel, and Israeli military actions in Gaza, and reopen the Gaza crossings for humanitarian and commercial supplies. He expressed particular gratitude to Governments that have hosted refugees and closely cooperated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) over the years, to UNRWA staff who performed their tasks under very difficult conditions and to the donors for their generous assistance.

10. **Paul Badji**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that the Palestinians who had fled their homes in 1948 remained refugees sixty years later, and their status had been passed on to subsequent generations. No other group in modern history had remained refugees for such a long time, yet received so little attention of the international community.

11. As he welcomed the revitalization of permanent status negotiations thanks to the political momentum created at Annapolis, he stressed that the refugee question was among the most difficult, sensitive and emotional of the final status issues. The Committee's position was that the Israeli occupation was at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With the ongoing consolidation of "facts on the ground," however, there As he welcomed the revitalization of permanent status negotiations thanks to the political momentum created at Annapolis, he stressed that the refugee question was among the most difficult, sensitive and emotional of the final status issues. The Committee's position was that the Israeli occupation was at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With the ongoing consolidation of "facts on the ground," however, there were few signs that Israel was serious about ending the occupation. Of particular concern was the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the population consisting mostly of refugees, continued to suffer due to routine Israeli military raids and the humanitarian crisis resulting from total closures. While condemning the killing of civilians by both sides, the Committee reiterated that Israel, as the occupying Power, was obligated under the Fourth Geneva Convention to protect civilians under its occupation and was responsible for ensuring the overall welfare of the population, including that of the Gaza Strip.

12. **Marcio Barbosa**, Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Representative of the Director-General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura, said the Conference was taking place at a critical moment. Annapolis had represented the first serious opportunity in several years to work towards a peace treaty involving the resolution of all permanent status issues, including that of refugees. During the Paris Donors' Conference in December 2007, the international donor community had responded positively to the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan.

13. Although UNESCO did not deal directly with the issue of refugees, it provided assistance to the Palestinian people on matters related to its sphere of responsibility, and cooperated with UNRWA on matters relating to the education of refugees, he stated. UNESCO, together with the Palestinian Authority, had identified strategic areas for joint action, including the promotion of quality education; the development of higher education and scientific research; support for the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage; development of media legislation; and gender and youth outreach. UNESCO continued to pay special attention to programmes and activities that directly benefited those communities most affected by the humanitarian crisis, including refugees.

14. **Elias Sanbar**, Permanent Observer of Palestine to UNESCO and Representative of Palestine at the Conference, conveyed to the participants the greetings of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. He said the year 2008 marked the sixtieth year since the 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe) that had befallen the Palestinian people, by which Palestine refugees were dispersed by force from their homeland. They remained a stateless, dispossessed and dispersed people, due to Israel's intransigence and disrespect for international law. Israel, while actively implementing a law that permitted the immigration of any Jewish person from anywhere in the world, continued to deny Palestine refugees the right to return, and even denied any responsibility for their plight, which tragically continued, as underscored by the crisis in the Gaza Strip and in the Nahr El-Bared camp.

15. Referring to the indispensable role that UNRWA has been playing by providing essential assistance to the Palestine refugees, helping to preserve their rights and acting as a protecting presence in times of conflict and crisis, he reaffirmed the necessity for continuation of the UNRWA mandate pending the resolution of the refugee issue on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The long-standing support of the international community, including the host Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the donor community, had been crucial. The United Nations in particular had a permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until the full realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the right of the Palestine refugees to return, he stressed.

16. The representative of **Cuba**, speaking on behalf of the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** said that after the Annapolis Conference and the Paris Donors' Conference, some predicted that sustained progress in the peace process in the Middle East would take place. Unfortunately, reality had proved completely different as a result of the continued deterioration of the situation on the ground, particularly in the Gaza Strip and due to the illegal measures and practices carried out by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population. The situation did not benefit anyone, not even the people of Israel, and the current paralysis in the Security Council was unjustifiable, he stressed. NAM urged the Quartet to continue to work actively with the Palestinians and Israelis in order to carry forward direct and essential negotiations between both parties and encourage immediate and positive steps on the ground to promote a genuine resumption of the peace process. NAM rejected the attempts to modify the terms of reference of the peace process and the imposition of measures and strategies aimed at imposing an illegal unilateral solution by Israel.

17. The representative of **Senegal**, speaking also on behalf of the **Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)**, said that at the recent OIC Summit in Dakar the question of the Palestine refugees had been high on the participants' agenda. Senegal, the country which chaired the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, would spare no effort to support the Palestinian people and was unwaveringly committed to peace in the Middle East, which was one of the top priorities of the President of Senegal.

18. The representative of **Malaysia**, aligning himself with the statements by NAM and OIC, said Malaysia insisted on the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes or, for those who choose not to do so, to accept compensation whereby Israel should acknowledge its moral responsibility for the expulsion of the refugees. The Government of Malaysia had provided various forms of assistance to the Palestinian people, including scholarships for Palestinian students and assistance towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Palestinian society in both cash and technical assistance. Malaysia was also contributing regularly to the UNRWA budget. He reiterated Malaysia's readiness to provide technical expertise to the Palestinians, including through the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme and the Capacity-Building Programme for OIC countries.

19. The representative of **Morocco** said the problem of refugees lay at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Animated by a wish to support the peace process, Morocco had taken part in the Annapolis Conference and the Paris Donors' Conference, where it announced a contribution of \$5 million to support the Palestinian economy. He called on the donor community to step up their contributions to UNRWA to put it on a solid financial footing.

20. The representative of **Indonesia** said Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and its aggression against Palestinians not only violated international and humanitarian law, but also perpetuated the refugee crisis. To resolve the conflict, it was important to recognize the implementation of the right of return of the Palestine refugees. She warned that as long as Israel remained convinced that there was lasting security in ignoring the demands of the international community there could be no progress, peace or resolution. She called on the Palestinians and Israelis to grasp the opportunity arising from the Annapolis Conference, rebuild confidence, restore Palestinian unity and shun the temptation of easy violence and aggravation, including the construction of settlements. She welcomed the forthcoming Middle East conference in Moscow as an opportunity to move the Annapolis process further.

21. The representative of the **African Union** said that the next month would mark the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of Israel, but also of the Palestinian Nakba. The question of Palestine had always been on the agenda of Organization of African Unity and African Union Summits, including the recent one in Addis Ababa. The African Union aligned itself with the pertinent United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as the basis for the consideration of the refugee question. She commended the role of UNRWA in providing humanitarian services to the Palestine refugees.

22. The representative of **Jordan** said that any peace agreement that did not take into account the rights of the refugees and displaced persons in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and Security Council resolution 237 (1967), would remain a dead letter. As the host country with the largest Palestine refugee population, Jordan remained particularly concerned about the issue. He called for donor countries to increase their contribution to the UNRWA budget, and for increasing the resources available to the UNRWA office in Jordan, which were not commensurate with the numbers of refugees there. Welcoming the visit by the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to refugee camps in Jordan, he invited other leaders to make field visits to see the situation first-hand.

23. The representative of the **Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)** briefing the participants on the humanitarian situation in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory emphasizing that State and non-State actors had an obligation to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, not to target civilians and to protect civilians from undue violence and suffering. The continued disregard of those basic obligations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel was particularly alarming. He highlighted the detrimental humanitarian impact of the attacks by Palestinian militants on the Gaza crossings, which the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator had condemned as cynical and irresponsible. He stressed that it was crucial that the Gaza crossings be reopened in order to avert a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. While welcoming the removal of some Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank, OCHA remained very concerned about the increasing restrictions placed on the United Nations and other humanitarian personnel working there.

24. The representative of **South Africa** aligned herself with the statements by the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Union. The South African Government voiced its concern over the Israeli closures and restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly humanitarian assistance. She reiterated South Africa's opposition to the continued construction of the separation wall, which had a serious impact on the socio-economic situation of Palestine refugees. One of the major challenges for UNRWA was the deteriorating conditions faced by refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in Gaza, which contributed to the need for increased expenditure by UNRWA. South Africa therefore called for continued and increased funding for the Agency.

III. Plenary sessions

Plenary I

Palestine refugees – the longest-running humanitarian problem in the world today

25. Speakers in Plenary I examined the following sub-themes: origins of the Palestine refugee problem - 60 years of dispossession and tragedy; the demographic distribution of Palestine refugees and the socio-economic problems facing Palestine refugee communities.

26. **Michael Fischbach**, Professor of History, Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, Virginia, traced the origins of the Palestine refugee problem issue back to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, when approximately 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled by Israeli forces, becoming refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and the surrounding Arab States. Most of them had their savings tied up in land and agricultural equipment they left behind, and thus lacked the means to establish a new existence.

27. Israel quickly began utilizing the refugee land, and by 1954, one third of Israel's immigrant population lived on confiscated refugee property. Israeli policy to retain the post-1948 ethnic composition of the country was of immense importance in understanding the Palestine refugee question, he emphasized. Israel stated it would compensate the refugees for certain categories of property, but categorically refused any large-scale repatriation. Israel quickly began utilizing the refugee land, and by 1954, one third of Israel's immigrant population lived on confiscated refugee property. Israeli policy to retain the post-1948 ethnic composition of the country was of immense importance in understanding the Palestine refugee question, he emphasized. Israel stated it would compensate the refugees for certain categories of property, but categorically refused any large-scale repatriation. The refugees have refused to accept compensation and permanent exile, demanding instead the right of return and property restitution.

28. The General Assembly defined the solution of the refugee problem in its resolution 194 (III), which called for refugee repatriation and property compensation. Despite the best efforts of the United Nations Mediator and of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, the United Nations was unable to make practical progress toward large-scale refugee return and property compensation and/or restitution. After the failed Geneva and Paris conferences, in 1950 and 1951, respectively, the United Nations largely abandoned its efforts to arrange a lasting political solution to the refugee problem, he said. By contrast, the most successful United Nations efforts to ameliorate the refugee problem had been those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Despite the passage of time and the changing of circumstances, the essence of the refugee problem, as it had emerged by 1951, remained essentially the same, he concluded.

29. **Salman Abu-Sitta**, Researcher and former Palestine National Council member, said that in the course of the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe, 78 per cent of Palestine had been conquered and 85 per cent of its inhabitants had become refugees. He emphasized that the total refugee population was considerably greater than the UNRWA figures indicated, as there were about 1.5 million refugees who were not registered with the Agency. Refugees constituted two thirds of the Palestinian people, or three quarters if one included those displaced in 1967, a ratio unprecedented in recent history. However after 60 years of wars, occupation and suffering, 88 per cent of the Palestinians still lived in the historic Palestine or within a 100-mile radius of it.

30. Well-known political reasons prevented their return, he continued, as he addressed some of the myths created to justify this situation, namely that the realization of the right of return was not physically possible. Using maps and original research, he showed that the land left behind by the refugees was still underutilized and underpopulated in Israel and could easily accommodate the flows of returning refugees.

31. Another myth being propagated was that of Israel as a Jewish State, he continued. There was no justification in international law, or in the United Nations Partition Plan, for a purely ethnic Jewish State. It was a slogan meant for the world and for the Palestinians, to accept that Israel was entitled to deny the refugees the right of return and even to expel its own Arab citizens if they were considered a demographic threat. It was a blatantly racist notion, morally repugnant and politically dangerous, he concluded, as he called on the United Nations and the international community to help the Palestinians achieve the most basic of human rights, the right to return home.

32. **Susan Akram**, Professor, Boston University School of Law, said that opponents of the Palestinian right to return argued that Palestinians had been displaced during a defensive war, and that Israel had no obligation to allow them in since they had left voluntarily. Refuting these arguments, she emphasized that humanitarian law regarding refugee return made no distinction between forcible or non-forcible displacement, and made no allowance for the nature of the wars causing it. Another common myth was that there had been an 'exchange of populations' between Israel and neighbouring Arab States. However, absent explicit consent of the individuals or States involved, of which no record existed, the transfers of populations which had taken place were illegal under international law, she emphasized.

33. The claim that Palestinians, as non-nationals of Israel, had no right to return, was also without merit, she said. Universal human rights instruments granted habitual residents of a territory the right to return to their precise place of origin regardless of current nationality or citizenship status. Moreover, under State succession principles, the new State should have granted nationality to all of the original inhabitants of the territory, as codified in many international treaties and legal decisions. Israel's massive denationalization of Palestinian Arabs was prohibited in 1948, and Israel remained bound to remedy the violation by implementing the right of return, she concluded.

34. She stressed that from State and international practice alone, it was evident that under international law, refugee return was the rule, and non-recognition of Palestine refugees' right to return was the aberration. Of the three recognized durable solutions of return, absorption and resettlement, only return was an absolute obligation on any State, since no State was required to absorb refugees. Israel claimed that General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had no binding authority or force of law. Yet Israel relied on the Partition Resolution 181 to justify its very creation and existence. Solving the refugee problem on the basis of law and justice was the key to a durable peace for the entire Middle East, she concluded.

35. **Daud Abdullah**, Researcher, Palestine Return Centre, London, said that 60 years ago the United Nations and the refugees had anticipated their return within a short period of time, while Israel had expected them to be absorbed into their places of refuge. Neither of these expectations had materialized. On the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba, the gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian positions remained as wide as they had been in 1948. The main differences had to do with the international legal references that guaranteed refugee rights, legal responsibility for the refugee problem, the scope of the problem and actual numbers of refugees entitled to return, where they should return to, and who would supervise the return and bear responsibility for the cost of their rehabilitation.

36. While acknowledging the generous humanitarian assistance received by the refugees from the international community through UNRWA, he decried the lack of adequate protective measures, which he attributed to the premature collapse of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine which had been mandated to provide such protection. Within four years of its formation, it had mutated into little more than a symbol of United Nations concern for the unresolved aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, he noted.

37. He stressed the establishment of the future State of Palestine was no substitute for the right of return. Neither should arguments pertaining to Israel's

domestic jurisdiction and domestic needs be allowed to stand in the way of the readmission to the Palestine refugees. General Assembly resolution 3236 of 1974 reaffirmed the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property as inalienable, meaning that it was absolute and permanent and could not be surrendered or otherwise terminated.

38. He emphasized that, according to accepted standards of international law, political agreements could only grant rights equal to or more extensive than those already guaranteed by law. He contended that the agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had been inconsistent with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Unlike peace agreements in most other refugee cases, they did not recognize the right of the refugees and displaced persons to return, repossess their homes and properties and receive compensation. He argued that the issue could not be resolved through exclusive negotiations between the politically unequal Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) alone. It was only on the level playing field of international, humanitarian and human rights law that the parties could attain parity, he stressed. He called for greater involvement in the peace efforts by other international parties such as the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the European Union.

39. **Souheil El-Natour**, Head, Humanitarian Development Centre for Palestinians, Beirut, said that over the past 60 years, numerous laws had been adopted that had had a dramatic impact on the lives of the refugees. The ethnic cleansing that had started in 1948 had not ended, and was continuing even today. Examples included Israeli practices such as the cancellation of residence permits for those who had left Jerusalem. Numerous refugees had departed the Occupied Palestinian Territory to work in Kuwait, for instance. In the wake of the Gulf War of 1991, they had been barred from returning because they had no valid identification cards.

40. He considered it quite natural that the host countries had changed their attitudes towards the Palestine refugees when Israel prevented the realization of the right of return. When the issue started to affect the countries' security and economic situation, it created a tense and sometimes violent relationship between the refugees and the host countries.

41. He said the issue of naturalization created a problem between the host country and the Palestine refugees. Palestine refugees were against naturalization, as they wanted to protect their identity and their right to return. Elsewhere, refugees in Iraq were being kidnapped and attacked by the militias and their houses were being destroyed. In Lebanon, the refugees had been welcomed but given only the right of residence, he said. The real question was whether there was a true political will worldwide to treat Israel like any other country, and enforce compliance with international law, or whether double standards would continue to prevail.

42. **Wajih Ahmad Atallah**, Secretary, Union of Youth Activity Centres in the West Bank and Gaza, Qalandiya refugee camp, said numerous laws and measures of the Israeli occupation had nullified development programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and hampered private sector efforts towards investment and reconstruction. The result had been ever-increasing displacement in a time of what he described as "non-war and non-peace". These practices were exemplified by the Gaza Strip siege, collective punishment, extrajudicial killings, and Israeli control of water and productive resources, confiscation of land, isolation, separation, arrests and restrictions on movement.

43. He indicated that the combined effects of those measures had pushed the refugees into a state of permanent anxiety and mistrust. The refugees suspected UNRWA of following the political dictates of other States when it continually reduced programmes and services as the number of refugees increased. The meagre wages available in the labour market were not enough to cover high indebtedness due to electricity and water consumption. The wave of price increases had had great repercussions for most families. The year 2006 had seen 35 per cent of students from the refugee camps leave their university studies, while only 40 per cent of those who had passed university acceptance requirements had actually enrolled. The dropout rate for elementary school students had also increased which, together with shrinking recreational opportunities, had caused new social problems, such as the exploitation of child labour, theft, road accidents and vandalism. Social interventions could play a useful role, however, the problem could be solved only by putting an end to the occupation and allowing the return of the refugees to their homes and possessions, he said in conclusion.

Plenary II

The United Nations and Palestine refugees

44. The speakers in Plenary II addressed the following sub-themes: the rights of Palestine refugees in international law and the role of the United Nations as a guarantor of international legitimacy; the role of UNRWA in providing relief, social services and development assistance to Palestine refugees, and the rights of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities.

45. **Mazen Masri**, lecturer and Ph.D. candidate, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto, stated that Palestine refugees were entitled to the rights accorded to refugees by international human rights law and international refugee law. General Assembly resolution 194 (III) was the first to detail the elements essential to solving the problem in conformity with international law. The essential elements were return, restitution and compensation. Those issues were also included as part of the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Furthermore, the United Nations had created the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, which included the protection of the refugees in its mandate, and has also created UNRWA to provide assistance and relief. The issue was also discussed in the various United Nations committees, the most recent discussion occurring in the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which had urged Israel "to assure equality in the right to return to one's own country and in the possession of property."

46. He stressed that while the provision of assistance and relief by UNRWA was still essential for the refugees, the need for a fundamental solution to the problem had become more and more pressing, as exemplified by the dire conditions of the refugees in the Gaza Strip and in Iraq, and the destruction of the Nahr El Bared refugee camp. He blamed the failure to resolve the issue on Israel's refusal to approach it from a human rights perspective, and on the lack of political will on the part of key Western powers.

47. He suggested that the role of the United Nations vis-à-vis apartheid South Africa could be seen as an experience worth learning from and replicating. United Nations resolutions had been able to effect change on the ground in South Africa because they had been accompanied by operative sections delineating action items to be adopted by Member States, he stressed. However, almost all of the resolutions on the question of Palestine were declarative. He called on the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to assume an active role in the endeavour, similar to the one played by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid.

48. **Lex Takkenberg**, General Counsel and Ethics Officer, UNRWA, said that, in addition to emergency assistance, and large-scale public works schemes, which by the mid-1950s were effectively discontinued, the UNRWA mandate had gradually evolved to include the provision of essential services in the areas of basic education, primary health care and relief and social services, with a gradual introduction of vocational training, microfinance and infrastructure support. In recent years, the Agency defined its mission as the "human development" of the Palestine refugees. Given that women and children comprised about three quarters of the refugee population, UNRWA devoted considerable resources to preventive maternal and child care.

49. He warned that the cumulative effect of years of underfunding had been a gradual erosion of the quality of UNRWA services. The social safety net UNRWA provided covered only a fraction of those living in poverty. UNRWA and the Government of Lebanon were currently planning for the reconstruction of the Nahr El Bared camp, which would further drain Agency resources; a donor conference to raise funds for that massive project would take place shortly, he indicated.

50. He focused further on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In the West Bank, he said, violations of Palestinian rights and freedoms occurred on such a scale that the absence of international attention was puzzling. UNRWA and other international agencies were also increasingly affected by Israeli restrictions on humanitarian access. In Gaza, 10 months of wide-ranging sanctions were stripping the civilian population of a dignified existence, he warned. Prompted by the widespread violations of humanitarian law and human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNRWA had during recent years prioritized its role in protecting Palestine refugees through monitoring, reporting and intervention.

51. Turning to the need for a durable solution to the refugee problem, he stated that although it was primarily the responsibility of political actors, including the political organs of the United Nations, UNRWA was nevertheless uniquely placed to highlight the need for such a solution through the public and private remarks of the Commissioner-General and other Agency officials. Restoring the refugees' access to national protection, and thereby bringing an end to refugee status and statelessness, could succeed only when refugees were able to make free choices regarding their future. History taught that accountability and reparations under international law were key ingredients for reconciliation and the establishment of normal relations between former adversaries, he affirmed.

52. **Rasmi Khader Almallah**, Member of Jordanian Senate, Irbid refugee camp, said that in view of the demographic growth of the refugee population, there was an increasing need for UNRWA services, especially given the unjust blockade suffered by the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He noted that social conditions in refugee camps had begun to deteriorate, with growing pockets of poverty, as a result of unemployment and of rising food and fuel prices.

53. Many of the school buildings used by UNRWA were unsuitable, and 95 per cent of them operated in double shifts, with overcrowded classrooms. Medical centres suffered from a shortage of staff and resources. In a single day, a doctor would attend to not less than 130 to 150 patients. UNRWA assistance provided for only some 5 per cent of the total number of refugees deserving aid. Even food assistance to widows, orphans and the disabled had been reduced to \$10 per individual every three months.

54. He called for increasing the number of health centres and improving their infrastructure, extending tuition to cover the secondary level of education; reducing school overcrowding and increasing the number of teachers; improving school infrastructure and eliminating double shifts; providing food supplies to all refugees, opening new women's centres and establishing professional training programmes; and making available loans and productive projects.

55. He welcomed the organizational reform of UNRWA, but felt that that project had not progressed sufficiently, and expressed hope that UNRWA would be able to give employment to the refugees on a priority base. Expressing the gratitude of the refugees to UNRWA, the donor and host countries, and to King Abdullah II of Jordan in particular, he highlighted the situation of refugees from the Gaza Strip in Jordan, and of those who had lost their Jordanian nationality, as presenting particular challenges.

56. **Sylviane de Wangen**, Lawyer, French Platform of Non-Governmental Organizations for Palestine, said that the vast majority of Palestine refugees living today had been born in their parents' host countries and not in the country of origin, which had later become Israel. She contended that those descendants of the 1948 refugees could not, from the perspective of international law, enjoy an individual right of return to Israel. Every individual had the right to return to his or her country, she said, but according to the 1951 Refugee Convention it was the country of birth, or nationality, or, if stateless, the host country. She cautioned that if the right of return on historical grounds were to be recognized as a general principle, it would cause a never-ending chain reaction of conflicts and wars.

57. She attributed the confusion related to the right of return partly to Israel, because it lent some legitimacy to its own Law of Return, and exaggerated the supposed demographic threat that the repatriation of refugees would represent for Israel. From a legal perspective, the individual right of return to Israel was relevant only for a few Palestinians, whose number was diminishing every day, she posited. Regardless, recognition of the collective right of return had become one of the major political demands of the Palestinians and of their representatives; a demand that the international community was obliged to consider.

58. Turning to the Taba talks of 2001, she said that a document submitted to the Israeli delegation recognized the responsibility of Israel arising from "the displacement and expropriation of the Palestinian civilian population, who thus became refugees." Specific solutions should have been proposed to the refugees regarding the choice of the country of residence and regarding financial compensation, but the talks had been interrupted by the Israeli elections. The subsequent quasi-diplomatic Geneva Initiative went much further in elaborating the options that would be available to the refugees, however, the Geneva Initiative was unsatisfactory insofar as it failed to acknowledge Israel's responsibility for the Palestinian exodus. Still the Taba talks and the Geneva Initiative showed that when the history, responsibilities and aspirations of the peoples involved in a conflict were recognized, a solution could be found.

59. **Usama Halabi**, lawyer and legal researcher, Jerusalem, focused his presentation on the legal status and rights of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities. During the Oslo peace talks, the Jordanian and Palestinian delegations to the Quadripartite Continuing Committee established to deal with the issue had defined the displaced persons as the individuals, their families and descendants who had left their homes in the West Bank and Gaza, or were unable to return to their homes, as a consequence of the 1967 war. The Israeli delegation wanted a narrower definition which included only the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip who were displaced as a result of the fighting. It was estimated that by the end of the 1967 war, 430,000 Palestinians or more than one third of the Palestinian population of the 1967 Occupied Territories, had been displaced, including 193,500 refugees displaced for the second time.

60. During the Madrid peace talks, and later, during the Oslo talks, a clear separation had been made between the issues of 1948 refugees and of 1967 displaced persons. He opined that it reflected the Israeli "salami approach" meant to keep the Palestinian side busy with the more mundane issues, and defer the core issues of the refugee problem, including the right of return and compensation, until a distant future. Unfortunately, except in the field of family reunifications, progress had been limited. Israel had not only opposed any attempt to implement the right of return of the refugees and displaced persons, but had also imposed on the Palestinians who remained in the Occupied Territory various legal and administrative measures, which had led to ongoing forcible displacement and dispossession. These measures included During the Madrid peace talks, and later, during the Oslo talks, a clear separation had been made between the issues of 1948 refugees and of 1967 displaced persons. He opined that it reflected the Israeli "salami approach" meant to keep the Palestinian side busy with the more mundane issues, and defer the core issues of the refugee problem, including the right of return and compensation, until a distant future. Unfortunately, except in the field of family reunifications, progress had been limited. Israel had not only opposed any attempt to implement the right of return of the refugees and displaced persons, but had also imposed on the Palestinians who remained in the Occupied Territory various legal and administrative measures, which had led to ongoing forcible displacement and dispossession. These measures included deportations, revocation of residency rights, demolition of houses and a large-scale land confiscation in connection with the construction of the separation wall.

61. He identified considerable ambiguity in the Palestinian position on the proper interpretation of the right of return. Many Palestinian intellectuals and officials had taken it to mean a return to national soil (in the West Bank and Gaza), rather than to the 1948 homes in Israel. He urged strong and continuous international legal and physical support for the refugees and displaced persons to maintain their struggle and to allow them to live with dignity. He expressed hope that an accord similar to the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995 might be reached in the region and that the refugees and displaced person would some day be able to avail themselves of the options of return, restitution and compensation.

Plenary III

International and regional efforts to promote a solution of the Palestine refugee issue

62. The speakers in Plenary III addressed the following sub-themes: the settlement of the refugee problem, a prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East; lessons from past efforts to achieve a solution and civil society efforts to uphold the right of return.

63. **Michael Chiller-Glaus**, Editor, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, said that it was clear to all the parties that an unlimited return of the Palestine refugees to Israel was not a realistic demand. It also ran counter to the concept of the two-State solution. However, the Palestinians could be asked to grant concessions regarding the return of refugees only if they were compensated with a contiguous State based on the borders of 1967 and an acceptable solution for Jerusalem. He noted that the Palestinians were almost unanimous in the view that to have any legitimacy, a peace agreement with Israel had to formally recognize the right of return. Among the refugees, there was also consensus that they should be able to choose for themselves among the options of return, compensation, etc.

64. He called for the practical aspects of the solution to the refugee issue to be separated from the issues of principle. He argued that previous negotiations had shown that Israelis and Palestinians had a large common ground regarding the practical elements. Moreover, Israel had allowed some 100,000 Palestinians to return under "family reunifications." He identified the issues of principle of the solution as presenting the most difficulty. The issues of principle included a formal recognition of the right of return by Israel, an apology and an acknowledgment of Israel's responsibility.

65. He pointed to the almost complete absence of public debate among Palestinians regarding the right of return; it had turned into something not to be questioned and under no circumstances given up. Nevertheless, all Palestinians had their own understandings of the meaning of the right of return. He identified the elements of a viable solution to the refugee problem as an acknowledgment of responsibility for the fate of the refugees by Israel; a mutually accepted formulation regarding the right of return, most likely a symbolic recognition of it by Israel; a resolution of the refugee problem, essentially through repatriation to a Palestinian State, resettlement in Arab host countries and in third countries, with a limited number returning to Israel; and compensation for hardship and lost property. He said the Palestinians would never accept return under the guise of "family reunification" or "humanitarian measures." As an assurance for Israel, it would be advisable to include a time frame regarding implementation and a clause that the agreement would represent the end of all claims. On the Palestinian side, the challenge was to involve the refugees in the process of developing a solution.

66. **Menachem Klein**, Senior Lecturer, Political Science, Bar-Ilan University, Israel, said there had been practically no serious negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians on refugees prior to the aborted Taba talks of 2001. He said the substance of the negotiations could be divided in two sections: the issue of the narrative, namely what happened in 1948 and who was responsible for the refugee issue; and the practical issues, such as who had the right to return, and where, was it an individual or a collective right; who had the right to compensation and who would decide on it, and whether the compensation, recently estimated by Israeli and Palestinian economists at between \$55 and \$85 billion, should be collective or individual. Host countries such as Jordan had also raised the issue of compensation for

hosting the refugees, he said. The need for infrastructure to support the return of refugees, and social issues, such as the relationship between the returnees and local populations, had to be addressed too.

67. One of the approaches favoured an agreement on a joint narrative as a basis for a compromise, he said. However, agreement was very difficult, even among the most left-wing Israelis and Palestinians meeting privately. Some concluded, therefore, that the discussion should be left to civil society and the historians, with the politicians called upon to deal with practical issues. He said the matter of the 1948 refugees was to be part of a package deal along with other final status issues, which would include trade-offs between items. A settlement of the refugee problem should include an end to claims and to conflict, he emphasized. He said the Arab Peace Initiative provided a framework for such a settlement and enjoyed Arab legitimacy and de facto acceptance by Hamas.

68. He said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was asymmetrical, with the Palestinians as the weaker side relying on international law to advance their claims, and Israel relying on its overwhelming superiority. He identified Track II, or unofficial, diplomacy, as a helpful approach to advance the understandings between the two sides regarding Jerusalem and refugees in particular. President Clinton's parameters of 2000 had been based on what had been agreed in Track II negotiations, as were the 2001 Taba talks. Any further negotiations would have to rely heavily on Track II, as the two official sides been caught up in their own taboos. He called on Track II diplomacy practitioners to learn from the solutions to refugee situations in other parts of the globe. He stressed that the refugee problem was tied to the self-identity of both sides. The real challenge was to accommodate the identity of the other side as part of the compromise. The tragedy was that both sides were caught between the past and the future, traumatic memories and fears, victimhood and self-righteousness.

69. **Géraud de la Pradelle**, Professor of International law, University of Paris X – Nanterre, said a legal analysis of rights had value only if the rights were supported by international political will, which was sadly lacking in the case of the Palestine refugees. In international law, refugee status had two aspects, protection and return to one's country of origin once conditions permitted. Palestinians did not benefit from the usual protections of international law as afforded by the 1951 Refugee Convention, because they had a special status afforded by UNRWA. As for the return aspect, much had been said for 60 years without any real result, except for isolated family reunifications.

70. He said the right of return was a reflection of another right, namely the right of any individual to live in his country, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed to all human beings, not only to Palestine refugees. The right of return was addressed in General Assembly resolution 194 (III), Security Council resolution 237 (1967), and in a somewhat diluted form in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), the Oslo Accords and the Road Map. It was an individual right, although in the case of the Palestinians, the right had strong national connotations. This individual right was also inheritable.

71. He stated that the national aspects of return had their drawbacks, because Israel had refused to allow return except to the future State of Palestine. There was also an advantage to the national right, as its exercise could be organized and directed by the Palestinian Authority, which, it was hoped, would be in a position to negotiate with Israel on the principles and the practicalities. He contended that the unintended effect of UNRWA assistance, numerous resolutions and academic studies on the refugee issue had been to postpone it to some distant future, instead on working on a practical solution today. On a more general note, he warned that civilization was witnessing a growing gap between the principles of international law and their application. If the great powers were not willing to rescue the principles they themselves had declared, the law itself would cease to exist, he warned.

72. **Terry Rempel**, Research fellow and Ph.D. candidate, University of Exeter, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, argued that in addition to the rights to return, restitution and compensation, the refugees had the right to participate in peace efforts. He described the Middle East peace process as an example of a non-participatory approach to peacemaking, which he attributed to the lack of effective mobilization among civil society actors, the absence of international support for civil society participation, exacerbated by the marginalization of the United Nations in the peace process, concerns by both Israel and the PLO about how to manage inclusion, failure to hold elections for the Palestinian National Council, the governing body of the PLO, and the exclusion of the Palestinians outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory from the Palestinian Authority elections.

73. He reviewed three popular initiatives to uphold the right of return, including efforts by refugees, by the Israelis and by the larger civil society. The Palestine Right of Return Coalition had been set up in 2001 to facilitate cooperation and coordination among initiatives and carry out joint activities. The Zochrot Association had emerged in Israel in part as a response to the failure of the Israeli "peace camp" and out of recognition of the need to deal with the root of conflict. The organization sought to engage the Jewish public opinion in Israel in remembering and talking about the Nakba. The Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions movement had emerged in 2005 when nearly 200 Palestinian civil society organizations signed a petition calling for an international campaign against Israel modelled on the South African example until it complied with its international law obligations. It came in response to Israel's refusal to implement the International Court of Justice ruling regarding the separation wall and the lack of international political will to enforce compliance.

74. He underscored the importance of these initiatives, describing civil society participation in the peacemaking process as a basic right, as a method of conflict resolution and as a mechanism to uphold the rule of law. Civil society participation, be it representative, consultative or direct, brought its own challenges, such as maintaining the integrity of the negotiation process, managing inclusion and incorporating divergent voices, but the exclusion of civil society also carried risks, including peace agreements and processes that lacked legitimacy and public ownership, insufficient protection of all persons affected by the conflict and failure to promote reconciliation.

IV. Closing session

75. **Saviour Borg**, Rapporteur of the Committee, introduced the Conclusions and Recommendations (see annex I), which were taken note of by the Conference.

76. **Riyad Mansour** (Palestine) said the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference would send a strong message to the refugees, who were commemorating 60 years of Nakba, that they were not alone. The expression of international support would help them to continue the struggle until the chapter of history of which the refugee question was but one component, could be closed.

77. He said that the Annapolis and Paris conferences and the proposed Moscow Conference showed that the international community believed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could only be resolved through multilateralism. He called on all those who cared about finding a just solution to the conflict to become involved in helping the parties reach a historic compromise to resolve not only the refugee question based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III), but also the other final status issues. The refugee problem affected not just Israel and the Palestinians; the host countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic were also affected. He said the Conference was being held in Paris in recognition of the importance of the role of the Europeans as peacemakers, and also as major donors to UNRWA. He announced that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People planned to organize a conference in Europe in the coming months on the other final status issues, including Jerusalem and Israeli settlements.

78. The suffering of the Palestinians was immense and 60 years of Nakba and 40 years of occupation were too long. It was time to put an end to the tragedy. The Israeli occupation would be terminated, the Palestinian State would emerge on the 1967 borders and the refugee question would be solved, he concluded.

79. **Paul Badji**, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in closing the meeting, stressed that the right of return of the Palestine refugees, one of the inalienable rights which was one of the Committee's mandates, was not just a high-minded and unattainable humanitarian ideal, or a bargaining chip, expendable in the context of a future permanent settlement, neither was the Palestine refugee issue one of those intractable chronic situations which can only be expected to be deferred indefinitely.

80. The conference discussions amply demonstrated that workable solutions were available, he stressed, however, that time was not on the side of the refugees. The situation of the Palestine refugees and the vortex of problems which it entailed were not improving with the passage of time. The problem cried out for a permanent solution.

Annex I

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees was convened by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris on 29 and 30 April 2008. The Conference was held in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 62/80 and 62/81 of 10 December 2007.
2. The objective of the Conference was to assess the present situation of Palestine refugees and examine the role of the United Nations in alleviating their plight. The Conference also examined efforts at finding an agreed, just and fair solution to the refugee issue in keeping with relevant United Nations resolutions, especially General Assembly resolution 194 (III), as a prerequisite for resolving the question of Palestine and achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.
3. The Conference evaluated the progress achieved since the previous United Nations International Conference on Palestine Refugees organized by the Committee, held in 2000. Participants noted with grave concern that today, 60 years after the original displacement of the Palestinians as a result of the Israeli-Arab conflict of 1948, the situation of the refugees, a particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged group numbering over 4.5 million, remained as precarious as ever, and the problem was no closer to a solution than it had been in 2000. For six decades now and for several generations, the refugees had been in exile, away from their homes, living in overcrowded camps with inadequate facilities, facing demographic pressures, severe socio-economic constraints and, frequently, dangerous security environments.
4. The participants expressed particular alarm at the situation in the Gaza Strip, where the refugee-majority population has seen its already meagre standard of living deteriorate further due to a crippling Israeli blockade and routine military operations. The participants called for an immediate and unconditional lifting of the Israeli sanctions imposed on the Gaza Strip. They held Israel fully responsible for the welfare and protection of the refugees in the Palestinian Territory it continued to occupy, including the Gaza Strip.
5. The participants also expressed their support for the rebuilding of Nahr Al Bared refugee camp which was destroyed in the summer of 2007.
6. As the participants analyzed the various practical approaches to resolving the issue, they stressed that a durable solution to the Palestine refugee problem, and by extension to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole, could only be achieved in the context of their inalienable right of return to the homes and property from which they had been displaced. The participants underscored the abiding relevance of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and subsequent United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine embodying this principle, and of the Arab Peace Initiative.
7. The participants noted that the right of return of refugees, a fundamental and widely acknowledged humanitarian and human rights principle, did not diminish with the passage of time, and was applicable equally to the Palestinians displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities and to the Palestine refugees of 1948. The various refugee resettlement and compensation schemes advanced over the years only supplemented but never substituted for that inalienable right of Palestine refugees.
8. The participants examined the broader political context surrounding the refugee problem. They expressed strong support for the Israeli-Palestinian political process resumed in late 2007 at Annapolis, where the parties had committed themselves to meaningful and ongoing negotiations with the intention of concluding an agreement by the end of 2008. At the same time, they expressed the view that any final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement must encompass a just and fair solution to the Palestine refugee question.
9. The participants were of the view that the United Nations should continue to exercise its permanent responsibility as a custodian of international legitimacy and uphold the rights of Palestine refugees until the question of Palestine was resolved in all its aspects. The participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its important and valuable work aimed at sensitizing international public opinion to the ongoing plight of the refugees, and for its role as a catalyst for efforts aimed at promoting a search for a just and lasting solution to the refugee issue, such as the current Conference.
10. The participants expressed their gratitude to States, intergovernmental organizations such as the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, the European Union and to civil society organizations, which had remained unwavering in their support for the refugees' rights over the years and provided material support to alleviate their conditions.
11. The participants emphasized the continuing responsibility of the United Nations and its agencies for relief and protection of Palestine refugees. The pivotal role played by UNRWA in that endeavour was particularly highlighted and emphasized. The participants noted the growing demand for UNRWA assistance and services, especially in the light of the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, and called on the donor community to redouble its efforts and provide vital support to meet the refugees' immediate and longer-term development needs.
12. The participants also welcomed the outcome of the Paris Donors' Conference and the generous assistance pledged by the international community to the Palestinians to underwrite the peace process and jump-start the Palestinian economy, while calling on the donors to give priority to the refugees' critical needs in that context.
13. The participants expressed appreciation to Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, for extending assistance in the preparations for the Conference, as well as for making the conference facilities available for the occasion.

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 30 April 2008

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Speakers

Daud Abdullah
Researcher, Palestine Return Centre
London

Salman Abu-Sitta
Researcher and former Palestinian National Council member
Kuwait

Susan Akram
Professor, Boston University School of Law
Boston

Rasmi Khader Almallah
Member of Jordanian Senate
Irbid

Wajih Ahmad Atallah
Secretary, Union of Youth Activity Centers in the West Bank and Gaza
Qalandia

Michael Chiller-Glaus
Editor, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*
Zurich

Géraud de la Pradelle
Professor of International Law
University of Paris X -Nanterre

Sylviane de Wangen
Lawyer, French Platform of Non-Governmental Organizations for Palestine
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Souheil El-Natour
Head, Humanitarian Development Center for Palestinians
Beirut

Michael Fischbach Professor of History, Randolph-Macon College
Ashland, Virginia

Usama Halabi
Lawyer and law researcher
Jerusalem

Menachem Klein
Senior Lecturer, Political Science, Bar-Ilan University
Ramat-Gan, Israel

Mazen Masri
Lecturer and Ph.D. candidate, Osgoode Hall Law School
York University, Toronto

Terry Rempel
Research fellow and Ph.D. candidate, Department of Politics,
School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Exeter, Devon
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Lex Takkenberg
General Counsel and Ethics Officer, Department of Legal Affairs,
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
Jerusalem

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

Paul Badji
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations
Chairman of the Committee

Rodrigo Malmierca-Díaz
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Vice-Chairman of the Committee

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

Saviour F. Borg
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations
Rapporteur of the Committee

Riyad Mansour
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Angela Kane
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Governments

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Non-member State having received a standing invitation to participate
as observer in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly
and maintaining permanent observer mission at Headquarters

Holy See

Entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers
in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining
permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Palestine

Intergovernmental organizations

African Union
The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
European Commission
Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
League of Arab States

Specialized agencies and related organizations
maintaining liaison offices at Headquarters

International Telecommunication Union

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Civil society organizations accredited with the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Al-Awda
Amnesty International
Association Createurs Sans Frontières
Association France-Palestine Solidarité
Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugees' Rights

Cités-Unies-France
Comité Palestine Israel Méditerranée
Comité de vigilance pour une paix réelle au Proche-Orient
Conseil mondial des associations d'éducation compare
Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme
Giuristi Democratici
Groupe d'amitié Islamo-Chrétienne
Institut Mehdi Ben Barka
Le Mouvement de la Paix
Middle East Fellowship of Southern California
Neda Institute
The Palestinian Committee for Intercommunication
Palestinian Committee of Right of Return
Palestinian Return Centre
Palestinians without Frontiers
Pax Christi
Portugal Movement for the Rights of the Palestinian People and for Peace
Women International Democratic Federation
World Council of Churches – Churches Commission on International Affairs
World Vision

Media

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European Parliament
European Press Photo Agency
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