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Committee on the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People
325th Meeting (AM)

PALESTINE'S PERMANENT OBSERVER INFORMS PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

QUARTET HAS INVITED ISRAEL, PALESTINIANS TO BEGIN DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS 2 SEPTEMBER

Announcement Comes as Committee Meets in Regular Session; also Discusses Situation on Ground in Occupied Territory, Political Developments in Past Seven Weeks

The Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations informed the Palestinian Rights Committee this morning that the Middle East Quartet had just minutes earlier released a statement inviting the Israeli and Palestinian sides to begin direct negotiations in Washington, D.C., on 2 September, aiming towards an agreement in one year. (See Press Release [SG/2161](#).)

News of the invitation unfolded today in the course of the regular meeting of the Committee, formally the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, with Ambassador Riyad Mansour updating its members as developments warranted. He reported moments later that United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had said in a press conference that negotiations would be hosted by United States President Barack Obama, with the likely participation of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, King Abdullah II of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) would be meeting in Ramallah in about an hour to study the invitation and the statement's content, following which it would "make an official determination of the Palestinian side", Mr. Mansour said.

Describing the Quartet's statement as similar to the one it had adopted in Moscow on 19 March, Mr. Mansour said that the Quartet had been saying all along that Israel had to stop all settlement activities, including natural growth, and dismantle settlement outposts, and that the settlement freeze should extend to East Jerusalem. He expected that practical ways would be found to bring Israel into compliance. The Quartet had also indicated that negotiations should aim to end the occupation and create a Palestinian State alongside Israel, with borders "more or less" in accordance with those of 1967, he said.

Earlier, discussing the proximity talks, he said there was supposed to have been some progress on issues related to borders and security, but, unfortunately, there had been no progress in the six rounds of more talks. It had been suggested to the Palestinian side that proximity talks should move to direct negotiations. Although the Ministerial Arab Committee had recently agreed, in principle, to the idea of direct negotiations, the belief was that for any negotiation to succeed, the lessons of the past should be heeded.

The Annapolis process had not succeeded, for example, because Israel had refused to comply with its obligations under the Road Map, Security Council resolutions and other relevant agreements, he said. In particular, it had refused to comply with the global consensus that it stop settlement activities, including natural growth, which also pertained to East Jerusalem. Previous talks had also failed because the Israeli side had insisted on violating international law and creating "illegal realities" on the ground. So, returning to negotiations and increasing the chance of success required removing those obstacles from the path.

He said Israel had to accept the terms of reference when negotiating borders, for example, that those were from June 1967, with the principle of swap — if Israel took 1 per cent of Palestinian land then the Palestinians expected to take 1 per cent of theirs "in value and kind". "If we negotiate in such clear terms, then we will increase the chances of success," he said.

Elaborating on developments in the political process, Mr. Mansour said the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

Jerusalem, was “very critical and very difficult for our people”, as a result of the illegal and brutal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power.

In that connection, he drew attention to the debate last month in the Security Council, in which, he felt, participants had listened to a description of the tragic situation resulting from the blockade of Gaza and intensification of settlement activities in and around Jerusalem. (See Press Release [SC/9990](#))

He also noted a briefing to the Council this month by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, in which he had described that tragic situation. (See Press Release [SC/10009](#)) He could not report any improvement in the situation, and, today, was sending another letter to the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials detailing the crimes committed by Israel against the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in the last week.

Noting that an additional number of truckloads were being allowed in to Gaza, he said that was not sufficient and was “way below the needs of the people there”. Moreover, the process of approving projects, as the Assistant Secretary-General had noted, took at least three months — and that included the building of schools. The blockade against Palestinians in Gaza was “abhorrent”, and the global consensus, including persistent calls by the Secretary-General, was to lift it immediately and completely.

Concerning the Secretary-General’s report last week on the Goldstone Report, the Palestinian side had conducted its work transparently and independently, and in conformity with international standards, and had submitted its report on 12 July, as requested. Israel had submitted its documentation — he believed, on 17 July — which had resulted from an investigation not based on international criteria or in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolution. He believed the Human Rights Council in Geneva would most likely conclude that the Palestinian side had fulfilled its obligations in that regard.

The Secretary-General’s recent formation of an independent inquiry to investigate the crimes committed on the high seas against the Gaza-bound flotilla had been positive, he said, pleased that the efforts of all friends, including in the Security Council, had succeeded in that regard. He looked forward to the probe’s preliminary report in mid-September. He added that Israel, which had refused involvement in “that issue”, had finally caved in to international pressure and had to participate in the panel of inquiry and provide it with everything it needed to conduct its work.

Also today, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, reported on the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine, which had been held in Rabat, Morocco on 1 and 2 July on the theme “Strengthening the support by African States for a just and lasting solution of the question of Jerusalem”. Deeming that Meeting a success, with a good turnout, he said it had been emphasized that the question of Jerusalem had remained a key permanent status issue in any future peace negotiations.

Participants, noting that Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem had never been recognized by the international community, had expressed serious concern about illegal Israeli practices aimed at altering the status and demographic character of East Jerusalem, he recalled. It had also been stressed that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, with a negotiated solution to the question of Jerusalem that took into account the concerns of both sides, while ensuring access to the city’s holy sites by the people of all religions. The two days had wrapped up with the issuance of a concluding statement of the organizers.

Morocco’s representative said he had regretted the absence of the Committee’s Chairperson at that Meeting, but understood his prior commitments.

Committee Chairperson Paul Badji of Senegal said he would have liked to participate, but for reasons beyond his control had been unable to do so. He highlighted some major developments over the past seven weeks since the Committee’s last formal meeting, as follows: the approval by the Israeli Cabinet on 14 June of an Israeli commission of inquiry into the Gaza flotilla incident on 31 May; briefing to the Security Council on 15 June by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; Israel’s formal announcement on 20 June of the easing of the Gaza blockade; African Meeting on Question of Palestine; meeting on 6 July between Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and United States President Obama; and briefing to the Council on 21 July by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe and an open debate.

Also: the appointment on 23 July by the President of Human Rights Council of three experts to international fact finding mission on the Gaza flotilla; the eighteenth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Lisbon, Portugal, organized by the Department of Public Information, 22-23 July; endorsement in principle by the Arab League on 29 July of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; statement on 2 August by Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office that Israel would take part in the United Nations investigation into the Gaza aid flotilla incident; and the briefing by Mr. Fernandez-Taranco to the Council on 17 August.

In other business today, the Committee welcomed Venezuela’s request to become a full member and agreed to forward its decision to the General Assembly for endorsement. Venezuela’s representative thanked Committee members. The representatives of Cuba, Malaysia and Nicaragua welcomed Venezuela as a full-fledged member of the Committee, as did the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

A decision was also made to accredit four non-governmental organizations to the Committee. [Copies of their applications were included in Working Paper No. 7, which was distributed by the Secretariat in advance of the meeting.]

The Chairperson expressed sincere condolences to the delegation of Malta and to the Permanent Representative of Malta and Committee Rapporteur on the death on 12 August of the country’s former President, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and former President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco. He had been an ardent supporter of a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine on the basis of international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions. He had contributed personally to identifying practical ways to advance the peace process, Mr. Badji said.

Before the meeting concluded, a 30-minute film was presented, entitled *Alienation of Jerusalem*. An accompanying synopsis says the documentary, produced by Saad Aroui, depicts the current situation in East Jerusalem, showing home demolitions and forced evictions, and features interviews with the victims of such policies. The film, it notes, had been screened on 26 May at the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, held in Istanbul, Turkey, under the Committee’s auspices.

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