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<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf>*

**I. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE
INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

On 3 February 2000, at its 250th meeting, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People opened its 2000 session with statements by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the Chairman of the Committee and the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

The Committee re-elected Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal) as Chairman. Also re-elected were Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba) and Ravan Farhâdi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairmen and Walter Balzan (Malta) as Rapporteur.

The Secretary-General's statement, as contained in press release [SG/SM/7294-GA/PAL/817](#), is reproduced below:

Secretary-General's statement

Let me at the outset congratulate you on your unanimous re-election to the leadership of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. It is clear recognition of the unstinting commitment you, Ambassador Ka, and your country have shown in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Today, you open your first session in the year marking the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ -- a momentous event for the world and of particular significance in the Middle East. The General Assembly has marked it with the adoption of the "Bethlehem 2000" resolution, and this Committee helped promote world support for the restoration and renewal of Bethlehem, and other Palestinian cities and communities.

At the outset of the millennium, we are witnessing a restoration and renewal of hope in the peace process in the Middle East. As we meet today, there are real reasons for optimism. The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are back on track. They are, in fact, in the midst of a crucial phase, with the prospect of further progress in the coming months. I know there are hurdles, but let's be hopeful.

Already, following the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum last year, we have witnessed the further redeployment of troops from the West Bank; the agreement on prisoners; the opening of safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and the resumption of the negotiations on permanent status issues.

The November trilateral summit in Oslo helped the parties set up additional negotiating mechanisms, as well as a timetable for the framework and final settlement agreements to be concluded this year.

Let me, therefore, commend Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, and Ehud Barak, Prime Minister of Israel, for their courage and their commitment to the cause of peace and reconciliation. Their work has rekindled our hopes that peace, based on Security Council [resolutions 242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#), may be within reach at last.

And yet, the situation on the ground is not without problems. There is much anxiety among Palestinians over the construction and expansion of settlements and roads, and the impact this might have on the permanent status negotiations. I have called on the parties to preserve and build, instead, on the fragile accomplishments of the peace process, and to refrain from actions that might prejudice the outcome of the negotiations. I would also urge the parties not to lose sight of the need for a just solution to the refugee question, without which peace and stability cannot take hold without improved economic and social conditions. Some progress has been made in health and education, in employment opportunities, and in industrial development and Palestinian institution-building. But much remains to be done. Through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other entities, the United Nations will continue to contribute to these efforts.

In particular, I would like to emphasize the key role that UNRWA has played for 50 years in providing much-needed assistance to Palestinian refugees. Despite chronic financial constraints, it remains a vital source of humanitarian assistance to more than 3 million refugees. It is my sincere hope that UNRWA will get the resources it needs to continue this crucial mission on behalf of 3 million men, women and children, whose basic needs constitute a humanitarian imperative beyond other considerations.

At this stage, it is all the more crucial to ensure that United Nations support for the peace process is well-prepared and coordinated, and that United Nations development assistance plays an effective part in that support. That is why I am glad to have secured the services of Terje Rød-Larsen of Norway - who has been closely involved in the peace process since the early stages of the Oslo negotiations - as Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, and as my Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

I know that, in the critical transitional period ahead, Mr. Rød-Larsen will spare no effort in making the assistance provided by the United Nations more effective and more focused.

For a quarter of a century, this Committee has worked steadfastly to bring closer the day when Palestinians will be able to exercise their inalienable national rights. As we enter the new millennium, it is my hope that the parties will overcome the remaining hurdles on the road to peace and that the international community will do all it can to help them on that journey. I pledge that the United Nations will spare no effort in this regard, and I wish you all a most productive session.

The Chairman of the Committee introduced the programme of work of the Committee for the year 2000. The Committee adopted the programme, as contained in document A/AC.183/2000/CRP.1, which is reproduced below:

Programme of work for 2000 of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Mandate of the Committee

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the year 2000 is contained in General Assembly resolutions [54/39](#), [54/40](#) and [54/41](#) of 1 December 1999.

2. In its resolution 54/39, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee contained in chapter VII of its report; ¹/ requested it to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate; authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and thereafter. It also requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to mobilize international solidarity with and support for the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, and to involve additional NGOs in its work. The Assembly also requested the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it, at its request, the relevant information which they have at their disposal.

3. In its resolution 54/40, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continued to carry out its programme of work as detailed in the relevant earlier resolutions, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance, including, in particular, the organization of meetings in various regions with the participation of all sectors of the international community, the further development and expansion of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), the preparation and widest possible dissemination of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine, the provision of assistance in completing the project on the modernization of the records of the United

Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, and the provision of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority.

4. In its resolution 54/41, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments, its special information programme for the biennium 2000-2001, and outlined a number of specific activities to be carried out under the programme. The Assembly also requested the Department to promote the Bethlehem 2000 project, within existing resources and until the Bethlehem 2000 commemoration comes to a close, including the preparation and dissemination of publications, and audio-visual material and the establishment of a "Bethlehem 2000" site on the United Nations Internet home page.

II. Priority issues in the programme of work of the Committee for 2000

5. The Committee has reviewed the various aspects of its own programme of work and that of the Division for Palestinian Rights, as well as of the mandates governing them. The Committee holds the view that further adjustments in this programme are necessary in order to enhance its responsiveness to the developments in the peace process and the situation on the ground, as well as its effectiveness in promoting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

6. In its conclusions and recommendations to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, the Committee reaffirmed its strong support for the peace process and the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on permanent status issues. It expressed the hope that those negotiations would be conducted in compliance with the timetable agreed in the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, signed on 4 September 1999. The Committee emphasized that strong international consensus had emerged with respect to the need to reach a final settlement in the year 2000. The Committee also maintained that, at this crucial juncture, the international community should spare no effort in order to bring about a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, as well as peace and stability to the entire region of the Middle East.

7. The Committee believes that its mandated programme of activities has played a useful role in heightening international awareness of the question of Palestine and in sensitizing public opinion in the various regions with respect to the relevant issues. In the light of this, the Committee will continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in its work programme in order to respond adequately and in a timely manner to the evolving situation on the ground and in the peace process.

8. As the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations enter a critical and delicate stage, the Committee intends to continue to support the peace process through a variety of activities. In its work, the Committee will emphasize issues relevant to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and statehood without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty and the right of return. The Committee will address some crucial aspects of a Palestinian transition to statehood, including efforts at nation-building, international assistance in support of those efforts and the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

9. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution [54/22](#) of 10 November 1999, the Committee will continue to support the Bethlehem 2000 project of the Palestinian Authority and will continue to work towards mobilizing broad international support for this important undertaking.

10. The Committee holds the view that the cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights, in implementation of their respective mandates, should be strengthened. The General Assembly, in its resolution 54/41 of 1 December 1999, requested the Department, *inter alia*, to promote the Bethlehem 2000 project through the preparation of publications and audio-visual material and the establishment of a "Bethlehem 2000" site on the United Nations Internet home page. The Division will cooperate with the Department on this new activity.

III. Activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights

A. Action by the Committee

11. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to participate in relevant meetings of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, requiring international action.

12. The Committee considers that its participation in high-level conferences and meetings, an important aspect of its effort to promote international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, should be continued.

13. In cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, the Committee will continue to expand its contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including NGOs, in the areas under its jurisdiction and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. The Committee will consider inviting Palestinian officials and other Palestinian personalities to meetings of the Committee on particular occasions, as required. Following up on the success of the Committee delegation's visit to Gaza, from 16 to 18 June 1999, the Committee will give consideration to the possibility of sending a delegation or individual members of the Committee to visit the Palestinian Territory at an appropriate time, in conjunction with one of its meetings held in the region.

14. The Bureau of the Committee will continue its consultations with countries interested in the programme of work of the Committee, including members of the European Union, with a view to promoting an understanding of its objectives and greater participation in its activities.

B. Meetings and conferences

15. In response to the important recent developments in the peace negotiations and in order to make its programme of meetings and conferences more reflective of the evolving situation, as well as forward-looking, the Committee will focus the meetings programme on support for the peace process, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, Palestinian nation- and institution-building, economic and social development and permanent status issues. The Committee will continue to review and assess the effectiveness of this programme.

16. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 54/22, the Committee in its various meetings and conferences will continue to support and promote the Bethlehem 2000 project so as to ensure international support for the project, as well as the active international participation in the millennial celebrations in Bethlehem until the completion of the project at Easter, 2001.

17. As authorized by the General Assembly, the Committee, in the past, has made adjustments in the programme in order to respond to new developments. In 2000, the Committee will continue to strive, in cooperation with prospective host countries and institutions and the relevant Secretariat services, to limit the cost of conference facilities, equipment and servicing staff, while ensuring the success of its meetings and conferences.

18. The Committee will also continue to emphasize thematic events in the course of 2000, encouraging participation by additional countries and organizations, including those which have not so far engaged fully in the programme of work of the Committee.

19. Accordingly, the calendar of meetings and conferences to be held in 2000 will be as follows:

(a) United Nations Asian Meeting on the Question of Palestine, 1 to 3 March, Hanoi;

(b) International Conference on Palestine Refugees (in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States), 26 and 27 April, United Nations Office at Vienna;

(c) United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Peace Process, May, Athens;

(d) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, June, Cairo.

20. The Committee is grateful to the Governments of Viet Nam, Greece and Egypt for having agreed to provide venues for the above-mentioned meetings to be held in their respective capitals.

C. Cooperation with civil society

Non-governmental organizations

21. The role of civil society organizations in educating their respective constituencies about the fundamental issues of the question of Palestine and in mobilizing public support for the Palestinian cause remains very important. Aware of the challenges that lie ahead, the Committee is particularly appreciative of those NGO contributions that are focused on mobilizing international solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for the achievement of its inalienable rights, as well as supporting the peace process and the work and objectives of the Committee. There is a greater need for sustained campaigns aimed at informing public opinion and promoting national and international action in support of the peace process, the effective implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, and of a just and lasting peace in the region. The Committee believes that, in 2000, NGOs should focus their efforts on areas relevant to the permanent status issues, namely Jerusalem, settlements and refugees. The Committee also takes the view that it is important for the NGOs to continue to support the peace negotiations and promote the need for the conclusion of an agreement on the permanent settlement in September 2000. Promoting varied assistance to the Palestinian people in nation-building and economic and social development should be another important area of NGO work.

22. The Committee intends to continue its practice of inviting civil society organizations to all international conferences and meetings organized under its auspices. It will encourage them to use these events as a platform for discussing their initiatives and campaigns, and for bringing forward their views and ideas on the issues at hand. The participation of Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in those events provides civil society with a unique opportunity to support and strengthen, in particular, such positions and initiatives that are geared towards the realization by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

23. The Committee encourages cooperation, coordination and networking among civil society organizations. It will maintain and develop its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms accredited to it, in addition to the already established liaison with a large number of individual NGOs. It will continue the accreditation of new NGOs and their umbrella organizations and asks the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue and intensify outreach efforts directed at civil society. Periodic meetings and consultations with NGO representatives will contribute to further review and enhancement of the Committee's programme of cooperation with NGOs.

24. The Committee takes the view that regular exchange of information with the NGO community on respective initiatives and the various current and planned activities and their results is crucial to its cooperation with civil society. The Committee encourages the accredited NGOs to keep the Committee abreast, on a regular basis, of major NGO activities and campaigns in support of the Palestinian people. In this connection, the Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue to develop its Internet site on NGO activities on the question of Palestine (www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo) as a central tool for the exchange of information and communication between the United Nations and civil society. Meetings of the Committee, as well as its international conferences and meetings, can also be used by NGOs to present results of major initiatives and campaigns on the question of Palestine.

25. In the course of the year, the resources available for cooperation with NGOs on the question of Palestine will be used to implement the

following:

- (a) Organization, wherever appropriate and feasible, of meetings of NGOs in conjunction with international conferences and meetings held under the auspices of the Committee;
- (b) Periodic consultations with representatives of NGOs, parliamentarians and inter-parliamentary organizations;
- (c) Participation of representatives of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in significant conferences, meetings or other events organized by NGOs and other civil society organizations;
- (d) Providing Palestinian organizations with assistance in sending their representatives to meetings held under the auspices of the Committee or meetings organized by other civil society organizations;
- (e) Periodic visits by members of the Committee and staff of the Division to the territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority to brief local NGOs and institutions on the work of the Committee and to assess those of their needs that can be met through the Division's programme of work.

Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations

26. The Committee strongly believes that the role and contribution of national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations in shaping public opinion and formulating policy guidelines is important for upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee attaches great importance to developing further cooperation with parliaments and representatives of inter-parliamentary bodies in order to encourage discussion of the current peace process and the various aspects of the question of Palestine within the respective parliaments and among all the layers of society. To that end, the Committee intends to involve parliamentarians and representatives of inter-parliamentary organizations in its international conferences and meetings. Consultations between the Committee and representatives of parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations, held during international events to be organized by the Committee could serve as a starting point for enhanced cooperation between the two sides.

27. Through this programme of cooperation with civil society, the Committee intends to improve its relationship with the various organizations active on the question of Palestine and make it more effective and focused.

D. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

28. The Committee has requested the Division for Palestinian Rights to make an effort to complete, in the course of the year, the development of UNISPAL, an activity mandated by the General Assembly in 1991. This work should include entry into the system of additional documents, improvement of the quality control and user-friendliness of the system and the further development and management of "UNISPAL" and "Question of Palestine" sites on the Internet.

29. The Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to take the necessary steps towards completing its work on the project of modernizing the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and to make an effort to complete the current work stage at the end of the first trimester of 2000. The Committee holds the view that the study on the political and legal aspects of the work of the Conciliation Commission, undertaken by a consultant, should be completed within the same time period.

E. Other activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights

Publications

30. The Committee considers that the Division for Palestinian Rights should continue to prepare and issue in a timely manner its periodic publications, namely:

- (a) Monthly bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine;
- (b) Periodic bulletin on developments in the peace process;
- (c) Monthly chronological summary of events relating to the question of Palestine;
- (d) Annual compilation of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council;
- (e) Reports of meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee;
- (f) Annual bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

31. In addition, the Committee requests the Division to continue to prepare its informal periodic summary of information on significant activities of NGOs relevant to the question of Palestine for the information of the Committee and for communication to the network of NGOs.

32. The Committee believes that the Division, in consultation with the Bureau, should review the existing studies and information notes prepared by the Division and make proposals with regard to those that require updating.

Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

33. The Committee considers that this useful programme, carried out in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, should be continued in 2000. The Committee considers that the experience of the previous years of the training programme should be evaluated, in consultation with the Mission, and used in such a way as to maximize the programme's effectiveness and usefulness for Palestinian Authority trainees.

Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

34. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [32/40 B](#) of 2 December 1977, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Wednesday, 29 November 2000. It is envisaged that the observance will take place at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna and elsewhere in accordance with established practice.

35. The Committee will again commemorate this anniversary with a solemn meeting and other activities. During the week beginning 27 November, a Palestinian cultural exhibit will be presented at United Nations Headquarters in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

36. The Committee will continue to review and assess its programme of work in the light of new developments in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and the situation on the ground, and will make adjustments as necessary.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 ([A/54/35](#)).

II. UNITED NATIONS ASIAN MEETING ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, HELD IN HANOI FROM 1 TO 3 MARCH 2000

The United Nations Asian Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held in Hanoi from 1 to 3 March 2000, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 54/39 and 54/40 of 1 December 1999. The theme of the Meeting was "Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – a key to peace in the Middle East."

The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Ibra Deguène Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and of the Meeting; Walter Balzan (Malta), Rapporteur, who acted as Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Meeting; Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam); and Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

The Meeting was attended by 51 Governments, Palestine, 5 United Nations bodies and agencies, 2 intergovernmental organizations, 9 non-governmental organizations, as well as special guests of the host country, representatives of the media, universities and institutes, including a group of students. Presentations were made by 20 experts from Asia and other regions, including Palestinians and Israelis.

At the opening session, a statement was made by Chu Tuan Nha, Minister for Science, Technology and Environment of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. A statement on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read out by his representative, Adrianus Mooy, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Statements were also made by Ibra Deguène Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and Suleiman Alnabbab, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Special Envoy of Yasser Arafat.

Four plenary sessions were conducted, with the participation of experts, as follows:

I. The peace process and Palestinian statehood: Suleiman Alnabbab, Member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Special Envoy of Yasser Arafat; Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem; Tamar Gozansky, Member of the Knesset and Deputy Chairperson of the Council of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality; Veleriyen Shuvaev, Head of the Division for Israel and Palestine of the Department of Middle East and North Africa of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Judith Kipper, Director, Middle East Forum, Council on Foreign Relations.

II. The United Nations and the question of Palestine: Mani Shankar Aiyar, Member of the Indian Parliament and Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee; Ron Macintyre, Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Centerbury; Chinmaya Gharekhan, former United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories; Dinh Thi Minh Huyen, Director of the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam; and Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

III. International support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people: Adam Keller, Spokesperson of Gush Shalom, the Israeli Peace Bloc; Andrew Vincent, Director of the Centre for Middle East and North African Studies, Macquarie University, Sydney; Eisuke Naramoto, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics, Hosei University, Tokyo; Li Guofu, Director, Division for South Asian, Middle Eastern and African Studies, China Institute for International Studies, Beijing; and Nguyen Quang Khai, Head of the Western Asia and Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

IV. *The role of parliaments in achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people:* Luvsanvandan Bold, Member of the State Great Hural (Parliament) of Mongolia and Member of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament; Phan Quang, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Relations of the National Assembly of Viet Nam; Tamar Gozansky, Member of the Israeli Knesset; Hoang Thinh, Vice-Chairman of the Viet Nam Committee for Afro-Asian-Latin American Solidarity and Cooperation; and Mohideen Abdul Kader, Legal and Research Consultant, Third World Network.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations at the Meeting met informally to discuss issues of mutual interest, including the exchange of information on their initiatives and projects, as well as funding and relationships with Governments.

A final document, approved by participants at the concluding session, summarized key points made at the Meeting:

Hanoi Declaration

We, the participants of the United Nations Asian Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held under the theme “Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people – a key to peace in the Middle East,” in Hanoi, City of Peace, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, declare:

Our broad and determined commitment to support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State;

That Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, as well as other Arab territories, must be brought to an end without delay and that mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence must be given the opportunity to flourish;

That Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which embody the principle of land for peace and form the legal basis for the Middle East peace process, must be adhered to;

That the recent breakdown in the permanent status talks puts the Israeli-Palestinian peace process at a critical stage. The lack of progress in the full and strict implementation of the Wye River and Sharm el-Sheikh agreements as well as the continuation of settlement activities are a cause of great concern and threaten to jeopardize the peace negotiations;

That in view of the continued settlement activities, the United Nations and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention should play an effective role in reconvening the Conference of the High Contracting Parties;

That Governments, intergovernmental organizations, parliamentarians and civil society organizations, particularly Asian non-governmental organizations, should exert all efforts to support the peace process and its successful conclusion;

That the deadline of September 2000 to achieve a permanent status agreement in accordance with the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum and the international consensus which was developed at the end of the five-year transition last May should be observed;

That the United Nations should grant full membership to Palestine to enable it to participate fully in the United Nations Millennium Summit to be held on 6 September 2000. The Summit marks an opportunity for a moral recommitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and new political momentum for international cooperation;

That Asian States, having had a unique experience in their struggle for decolonization and national sovereignty, should continue their moral, political and material support for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights. We welcome the long-standing commitment of Asian States to the peace process, particularly the efforts to achieve a permanent peace settlement between Palestinians and Israelis; Our appreciation to H.E. Tran Duc Luong, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; H.E. Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister of Viet Nam; H.E. Nguyen Dy Nien, Foreign Minister of Viet Nam; H.E. Chu Tuan Nha, Minister for Science, Technology and Environment of Viet Nam and to the Government of Viet Nam for hosting the Meeting and for the assistance and support extended to the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.

We salute the struggle for independence and the right to self-determination of the people of Viet Nam. We thank the people of Hanoi for their warmth and hospitality and for their assistance with the Meeting.

Hanoi, 3 March 2000

III. REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 1993/2 A

Below is the executive summary of the report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,

Executive summary

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur was established by Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/2 A of 19 February 1993, to investigate Israel's violations of the principles and bases of international law, international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and to report to the Commission until the end of the Israeli occupation of those territories. The current Special Rapporteur, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli (Italy), was appointed in December 1999 and this is his first report. The Special Rapporteur undertook a mission to the area, where he held meetings in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem with Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations, international organizations on the ground, grass-roots and community organizations, individuals and Palestinian Authority institutions. The Special Rapporteur regrets the lack of cooperation by the Israeli authorities.

In light of the mandate, this report addresses the subject of military occupation and actions and omissions of the Occupying Power limited to the duration of the occupation. In the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel bears the responsibilities of Occupying Power, as the Commission reaffirmed in resolution 1993/2. Obligations of international humanitarian law applying to Israel, its covenanted human rights obligations and those arising from customary law and general principles of international law constitute the framework for the investigation that has led to the present report.

The majority of refugees displaced as a result of the 1948 war, those from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem displaced in the war of 1967, and refugees from Gaza and elsewhere during and after the hostilities of October 1973 still live in 30 camps created after the 1948 war (8 in Gaza and 22 in the West Bank, including Jerusalem). Currently, at least 1,353,547 Palestinian registered refugees and other holders of the right of return (as well as to compensation and/or restitution) reside in the territories that are the subject of this mandate. Israel bears the primary responsibility for the implementation of the right of return.

Population transfer constitutes a particularly grave violation of human rights and humanitarian law and violates the long-established public international law principle of the unacceptability of the acquisition of territory by force, as well as specific resolutions concerning Israel's confiscation of land and settlement activities. Since 1967, Israel has confiscated an estimated 60 per cent of the West Bank, 33 per cent of the Gaza Strip and approximately 33 per cent of the Palestinian land area in Jerusalem for public, semi-public and private use in order to create Israeli military zones, settlements, industrial areas, elaborate "by-pass" roads and quarries, as well as to hold "State land" for exclusive Israeli use. Israel presently maintains 19 settlements in Gaza, 158 in the West Bank and at least 16 in occupied Jerusalem. In 1999 alone, Israel established 44 new settlement outposts in the West Bank.

Israeli occupation forces frequently carry out punitive and violent demolitions of Palestinian homes for lack of permit as well as forcible evictions of entire villages. Since 1987, 16,700 Palestinians (including 7,300 children) have lost their homes in this way. In 1999, Israel demolished 31 Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and 50 in the West Bank, the latter in Area C. Another 28,000 remain under threat. Israeli occupation practices also affect the natural environment of the occupied Palestinian territories, including degradation of the infrastructure, land confiscation, water depletion, uprooting of trees, dumping of toxic waste and other pollution.

Torture is absolutely forbidden, both under international human rights and humanitarian law, and freedom from torture is a non-derogable right. Although Israel ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1991, the Israeli General Security Service (GSS) has used torture systematically during the interrogation of Palestinians suspected of security offences. The United Nations Committee against Torture has determined that this amounts to a breach of the Convention against Torture, deemed it "completely unacceptable" and determined that it should cease immediately. On 6 September 1999, Israel's High Court of Justice issued a unanimous decision that ruled that the GSS violent interrogation techniques against Palestinian detainees were illegal, but refrained from defining them as torture and advised that such practices might be acceptable if specifically authorized by new legislation. The Court also indicated that GSS interrogators who would use these methods in extreme circumstances might not be criminally liable as they would be able to rely on the defence of necessity.

After the withdrawal and redeployment of the Israeli army from the major Palestinian cities in the West Bank in 1995, all Palestinian political prisoners were transferred from the occupied territories to Israel, in violation of article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Although there have been releases under the implementation of the peace agreements, the number of prisoners remains high, standing currently at about 1,500. The practice of administrative detention, without charges or trial, whereby orders can be renewed indefinitely for six-month periods, has continued. There has been a reduction in the number of administrative detainees, who currently number 13. The conditions of detention are said to be below international standards and difficulties of access to prisoners are faced by their lawyers and families.

The occupation, including the complete dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel, lack of infrastructure, measures of collective punishment such as closures and house demolitions have caused the disruption of the fabric of society, with particularly serious effects on the family, which is a fundamental social support resource in Palestinian society. Palestinian children have suffered considerably as a result of the Israeli occupation and more than 90 per cent have experienced multiple traumatic events in their lives. Attention should be drawn to the situation of Palestinian juveniles (aged between 14 and 17) imprisoned in Israel, in contravention of article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Four Palestinian children were killed in 1999; 102 children were injured, 82 by Israeli soldiers, 19 by settlers and 1 by both.

The enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms by the population of the occupied Palestinian territories is severely curtailed by measures such as closures, which separate parts of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, from each other as well as from Israel and which have been imposed systematically since 1993. The "Erez II" checkpoint under construction near Bethlehem will de facto completely separate the northern from the southern part of the West Bank, a situation compounded by permit requirements for non-resident Palestinians to enter Jerusalem. Closures have severely curtailed the freedom of movement, regulated through the policy of permits and magnetic cards, education and religion of the population of the occupied territories. There does not seem, however, to be any specific interference with freedom of expression.

The city of Jerusalem, under Israeli military closure since 1993, represents a concentration of the range of human rights concerns and the

combined consequences of the Israeli occupation. The Government's discriminatory treatment of Palestinians affects all aspects of life, as well as having dramatic ramifications on the demographic, historic and cultural nature of the city itself.

The economic dependence of the occupied territories on Israel affects all sectors, in particular owing to Israeli control of the movement of goods, trade, and especially the labour market, where Palestinian workers are discriminated against on the basis of their civil status and, on the pretext of security, receive disproportionately low wages, inferior benefits, and work under poor conditions. This has resulted in an estimated 10 to 15 per cent decrease in real per capita income for the population of the occupied territories from 1993 to 1999. There are currently some 50,000 Palestinian workers employed daily in Israel. Another category of workers affected are fishermen in the Gaza Strip who are exposed to attacks and harassment by Israeli navy patrols, as well as destruction of their nets.

The Special Rapporteur notes that violations acquire special gravity and meaning when taken into consideration in their composite form. Just as some of the above-mentioned violations tend to accumulate such that, each day that they are not dealt with, their consequences increase in gravity and effect, they also assume other dimensions and beget ancillary human rights consequences. The Special Rapporteur recognizes that the purpose of protection enshrined in humanitarian law, in particular in the Hague Regulations and the Fourth Geneva Convention, until today has not been served.

In general, the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur cannot be but that of a rigorous implementation of the letter and spirit of the relevant international norms, which implies the reversal of illegal trends, correction and, where appropriate, restitution.
