



DIVISION FOR  
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

# Bulletin

on action by the United Nations system and  
intergovernmental organizations  
relevant to the question of Palestine

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**Bulletin**  
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## **I. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONVENES THE UN SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN VIENNA**

*The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People at the United Nations Office at Vienna on 31 March and 1 April 2015, under the theme “Speeding up relief, recovery and reconstruction in post-war Gaza”. The following are the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered at the Seminar by Yury Fedotov, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna (SG/SM/16627-PAL/2187), as well as the Chairman’s Summary issued after the event:*

### **Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message**

I am pleased to send greetings to all participants at the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People. I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for shining an international spotlight on this important subject.

I welcome the focus of this Seminar on the energy and water needs of the people in Gaza. These pressing concerns take on even greater urgency in the context of a humanitarian catastrophe. Bringing together donor countries, the Palestinian Government, international experts and organizations, and the various parts of the United Nations family, you can help raise awareness and advance efforts to tackle the many reconstruction challenges in what remains a dire humanitarian situation.

This Seminar takes place over seven months since the end of the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism brokered by the United Nations has to date enabled access to construction material for over 60,000 Gazan homeowners in support of shelter repairs. In addition, some 42 construction and infrastructure projects funded by the international community and the private sector have been approved so far. The operations of the mechanism are ready to be scaled up to facilitate the swift

implementation of major large-scale projects.

In October, at the International Conference on Palestine and Reconstructing Gaza in Cairo, the international community came together to mobilize immediate support within a framework of longer-term sustainable development of Palestine as a whole.

I commend the Governments of Israel and Palestine for their continued adherence to the temporary mechanism, and their statements of commitment to a durable solution for Gaza. I also express my deep appreciation to the international community for its generous pledges of support for reconstruction.

However, I remain concerned at the slow pace of reconstruction in Gaza and the suffering of the people there in the aftermath of last summer’s brutal conflict. Tens of thousands of Gazans — men, women, children and the elderly — are still living in temporary shelters or United Nations facilities because their homes have not yet been rebuilt. The dangers are underscored by the fact that, during the winter storms in January, four children died due to inadequate housing.

The Government of National Consensus has still not fully assumed control over Gaza and the majority of the donor funds have yet to be received.

I urge the Palestinians to overcome their divisions, which are hurting the people of Gaza. I also reiterate my urgent appeal to donors to honour their financial commitments. This support should also include funding for United Nations agencies that are carrying out vital operations in Gaza, in order to prevent a further deterioration. I repeat my call on all sides to take immediate steps to improve living conditions and ensure a full opening of the crossings into Gaza, including Rafah, to allow for legitimate trade and movement of people. This will serve the interests of all.

At the same time, I again stress that only a comprehensive peace agreement leading to a viable and independent Palestinian State living alongside Israel in peace and security will durably resolve the conflict. I urge both parties to refrain from any action that could further exacerbate the situation and to demonstrate the necessary leadership for reaching and implementing the difficult decisions that lie ahead. We must break the cycle of build-destroy, build-destroy, build-destroy, which has caused so much needless suffering and waste.

I welcome initiatives by Member States and regional groups, including the Arab League, in the search of a way out of the impasse. I also expect that the new Government of Israel will extend its full cooperation to the efforts of the international community and reaffirm its commitment to the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. With the Quartet and all other stakeholders engaged, we may have a better chance in 2015 at addressing issues that seem intractable. We must resolve to do everything possible to advance progress.

In this spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful event.

### **Chairman's Summary**

The **United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People**, hosted at UNOV and organized under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, reviewed the pressing immediate and longer-term humanitarian and development needs in the Gaza Strip. During the Seminar representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, including various United Nations bodies, and civil society, together with expert speakers from Palestine, other countries and the United Nations, shared their expertise while examining Gaza's severe housing, fuel, power, environmental and water crises.

In his message to the Seminar at the opening session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations** noted the progress represented by the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism in moving forward with reconstruction. He warned, however, that the suffering of the people and the slow pace of reconstruction in Gaza persisted in the aftermath of last summer's brutal conflict. The Secretary-General urged donors to fulfil their commitments emphasizing the need to break the cycle of "build-destroy, build-destroy, build-destroy". He further called upon the Palestinians to overcome their divisions, noting that long-term stability and sustained reconstruction would only be achieved through the end to the occupation, a full lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip and by addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. That would require "a comprehensive peace agreement leading to a viable and independent Palestinian State".

The **Director-General of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria**, said the

international community had to help civilians, who continued to pay the highest price. Reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip depended upon efficient aid but also on a political process and freedom of movement, a pre-requisite to access to Gaza. Austria's assistance to the Palestinian people focused on the water sector, UNRWA and the ICRC. Austria stood ready to continue to assist Palestinians to find tailored solutions to their problems. Realizing the aspiration of all the peoples in the region would entail negotiating a lasting peace between two democratic States living side by side.

**The Chairman of the Committee** said that Gaza's already serious housing, fuel, power, environmental and water crises had intensified greatly in the aftermath of the war in 2014, becoming "a near catastrophe". Although there had been encouraging first steps, many obstacles remained on the road to full recovery. The Committee welcomed the formation of the National Consensus Government in the State of Palestine and the start of its activities in Gaza. Another encouraging development was the fact that an increasing number of States were recognizing the State of Palestine.

**The Representative of the State of Palestine** reminded that following years of cumulative destruction Gaza was only receiving "relief, not reconstruction assistance". The blockade of Gaza had to be removed if serious rebuilding were to take place. The Government likely to emerge in Israel was openly opposed to the formation of a Palestinian State. Israel wanted to annex 45 per cent of the West Bank "to its settlement paradigm" and keep Gaza isolated from the rest of Palestine. The Palestinian journey to self-determination had gone from armed struggle to accepting all Security Council resolutions promoting a lasting peaceful solution based on the two-

State solution, but the occupation had not ended. The Palestinian leadership, now united under a National Consensus Government, would continue the same struggle through legal and peaceful means in its quest of further international recognition (138 States had already recognized Palestine), by seeking justice through additional Security Council resolutions and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Israel wanted to maintain the status quo while Palestinians wanted to change it; the international community had a responsibility to induce a change of behaviour in Israel. Demographic realities meant that Israel would have the choice between a two- or a one-State solution. The latter would become a de jure Apartheid State if Israel maintained current policies.

In the **ensuing sessions**, participants recalled statistics describing the human toll from the 2014 war, including the number of dead, wounded, orphans and the devastation to Gaza's physical and economic infrastructure. The number of victims in 2014 had increased dramatically compared to previous conflicts. The destruction of tunnels prevented the only communication with the outside world, and 80 per cent of the Gaza population had become dependent on assistance. Poverty had increased exponentially, requiring psychological support in addition to infrastructure rehabilitation. The last war had a major demoralizing effect as it showed that "there were no red lines"; about 60 per cent of the population in Gaza were children and youth and many were traumatized as they had lived through three wars in a very short time-span. The 2014 war left a sense of pessimism among the population which had to be reverted. The October 2014 Cairo donor conference, coupled with the UN Secretary-General's visit to Gaza, provided a degree of optimism but the population had turned angry and frustrated because of the

slow pace of reconstruction and a clear trend towards de-development.

The **housing shortage** existed before the 2014 war, and three wars in the last six years had increased the sense of vulnerability and insecurity as the majority of the victims of the latest war were civilians, including children. **Local capacities** were exhausted after 7 years of blockade. Statistics showed that 28 per cent of the Gaza population was displaced at one point; 20,000 homes were uninhabitable, 144,000 required repairs. Hundreds of facilities, including Gaza's power plant, sewage treatment plant, schools and 75 health facilities had been damaged. Municipalities were unable to provide water to some 270,000 persons and 90 per cent of wells and desalination plants could not operate.

Participants emphasized that the **majority of the population** was **excluded** from any **economic activity and in need of social protection**; creating permanent or temporary jobs were the only way to pull out Gaza from the current situation. International assistance programmes were useful but only the agricultural, industrial and fishing sectors could give back to people access to a dignified and sustainable livelihood. However, shrinking arable land and scarcity of water presented serious challenges. An integrated reconstruction strategy had to be based on public and private partnerships, capacity-building at the local level, environmental awareness, community-based strategies, strengthening the role of women in the productive sector, special assistance to small and micro enterprises, particularly for sharing knowledge for innovative technologies including recycling, careful water management and alternative energy sources. Respect for sovereignty – ending the occupation, freedom of movement,

including the freedom to export and import goods and services – was paramount.

In the discussion it was underlined that “the crisis in Gaza was man-made”. As long as the root causes of the conflict remained unaddressed, the potential for recurring conflict was dangerously present – a fact also recognized by the UN Secretary-General and the US Secretary of State. However, no tangible progress had been made to end the occupation and the blockade. Some participants pointed to the need to expedite Palestinian reconciliation efforts in order to give the population additional hope.

Extensive discussions took place regarding the **need to re-establish reliable power supplies in Gaza**, through repairing the existing plant damaged during the 2014 war but also through innovative alternative energy projects. The possibilities and challenges regarding exploitation of **Gaza gas resources** were also discussed. Similarly, experts debated the challenges facing the construction of a large-scale desalination plant as Gaza's **water resources** were compromised and fast diminishing. Non-governmental organizations also presented creative alternatives regarding water collection and energy generation as small-scale solutions for communities. A **sea-port was described as a necessary option** not only for Gaza but for Palestine as a whole; in past times, a port in Gaza had provided a sea outlet to its hinterland. Such a facility could be operated through modalities which took into consideration security concerns in Israel.

Regarding the level of **international donor support**, Palestinian representatives warned that the figures were misleading. The 4.5 billion dollars pledged in October 2014 in the Cairo donor conference included funds already used as bilateral contribution

to UN agencies as well as budget support for the Palestinian Government; perhaps only half of those funds were actually “new money” for Gaza’s reconstruction. There was a general consensus urging donors to honour their financial commitments, including funding for United Nations agencies that carried out vital operations in Gaza. Representatives of Member States took the floor to inform the audience about the level of assistance provided by their respective Governments, and non-governmental organizations.

Representatives of the Palestinian Government expressed gratitude for the international community’s generosity. They encouraged coordination among donors and with the Palestinian Government, which should be the ultimate authority on allocating funds for reconstruction. Existing challenges were acknowledged but Palestinians were working to maintain unity between the West Bank and Gaza so that Palestinians could “get out of their cage and fulfil their basic needs”. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was a positive step but the Palestinian Government expressed opposition to the fact that Israel continued to have veto power on what could be imported or exported from Gaza; therefore, the limited duration of this

mechanism had to be emphasized as “Israel had no right” to determine Gaza’s reconstruction needs.

In the **closing session, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations** provided a historical overview of Palestinians’ ordeal during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and reaffirmed his country’s attachment to peaceful means to realize its right to self-determination. He celebrated the fact that on that very same day the State of Palestine had joined the International Criminal Court. He further called on the international community to adopt resolutions to stop illegal Israeli behaviour and achieve the two-State solution.

**The Chairman of the Committee** summarized the results of the meeting, acknowledging progress in the level of assistance provided but urging international partners and donors to fully engage in Gaza’s reconstruction. He further called upon international donors to honour their generous pledges and to promote practical steps to end Gaza’s blockade, to open its border crossing including with Egypt as well as to ensure that Gaza’s harbours received ships and that its fishermen continued to work without hindrance.

## **II. SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES REPORT ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

*On 1 April 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon submitted his report on assistance to the Palestinian people in accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/242. The following is the summary of the report (A/70/76-E/2015/767):*

The present report, submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 69/242, contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people, needs still unmet and proposals for responding to them. It provides a description of efforts made by the United Nations, in

cooperation with the Government, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions.

During the reporting period (May 2014-March 2015), the situation on the ground deteriorated following the breakdown of

peace negotiations. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to humanitarian and development challenges in the context of occupation, but placed particular focus on providing humanitarian assistance during and after the conflict between Gaza and Israel and support to the Palestinian Government of national consensus. The Organization, while

maintaining that full lifting of the closures of Gaza was required, brokered a temporary agreement between the Governments of Israel and the State of Palestine to enable the entry, use and monitoring of “dual-use” material into Gaza to allow reconstruction work and the rehabilitation of damaged facilities at scale.

### **III. SPECIAL COORDINATOR WELCOMES THE RELEASE OF PALESTINIAN TAX REVENUES**

*On 18 April 2015, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following statement on the release of Palestinian tax revenues by Israel:*

I welcome the announcement that agreement has been reached that will allow Israel to release tax revenues, collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

Withholding these revenues for over four months has undermined the stability of

the Palestinian institutions and the ability of Prime Minister Hamdallah’s government to pay public sector salaries and provide needed services.

This agreement is an important step in the right direction for both sides.

### **IV. SECURITY COUNCIL EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE YARMOUK PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP IN SYRIA**

*On 20 April 2015, the Security Council issued the following press statement on the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in Syria (SC/11865-PAL/2187):*

The Members of the Security Council expressed their deep concern regarding the grave humanitarian situation in Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria.

The Members of the Security Council called for unhindered humanitarian access to the Yarmouk Camp and for the protection of civilians inside the Camp. They welcomed UNRWA’s and Deputy Special Envoy recent efforts in Syria and stressed the need to support the emergency relief effort for civilians in Yarmouk including through funding the 30 Million USD emergency

appeal and to provide the diplomatic and political support for UNRWA.

The Members of the Security Council underscored support for UN efforts to assist trapped Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk through a three-point plan that includes 1) Providing assistance for civilians who are unwilling or unable to leave Yarmouk 2) Assisting those who want to “temporarily relocate” from the camp to do so in accordance with IHL and with appropriate safeguards that they will be allowed to do so safely and freely 3) Assisting Yarmouk residents who have already fled.



The Members of the Security Council called on all parties to support the UN framework and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights and refugees laws, and demanded that all parties cease all attacks against civilians, including shelling and aerial bombardment.

The Members of the Security Council condemned all acts of terrorism perpetrated and demanded that ISIL and Al-Nusra Front, UNSC-designated terrorist organizations,

withdraw from Yarmouk Camp immediately.

The Members of the Security Council called on all parties to immediately implement the relevant Security Council resolutions including Security Council resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191 and in line with the international humanitarian law.

The Members of the Security Council stressed that the Council has to remain seized on this matter.

## **V. SECRETARY-GENERAL BRIEFS THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION**

*On 21 April 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The text of the briefing is reproduced below (S/PV.7430):*

I am grateful to the Kingdom of Jordan for organizing today’s meeting. It comes at yet another crucial period in the evolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as the whole region is threatened by violent conflicts and extremism.

Over the years, we have seen determined efforts to achieve a comprehensive, negotiated peace based on a two-State solution. Instead of peace, however, there have been decades of missed opportunities and failures that have come at an enormous human cost. The prospect of a two-State solution continues to recede, with potentially explosive consequences. In the coming weeks, a new Israeli Government will be formed. I strongly urge the incoming Government to reaffirm Israel’s commitment to the two-State solution and to take credible steps to foster an environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations, including a freeze of settlement activity.

I welcome the agreement reached last week between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, under which Israel has now transferred more than \$470 million in revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. I wish to underline, however, that the recurrent withholding of such revenues is counterproductive and seriously undermines the ability of the Government of Palestine to carry out its responsibilities. I urge the parties to find a sustainable solution on tax collection in line with the Paris Protocol of the Oslo Accords.

Seven months since my last visit to Gaza, I continue to be concerned by the fragile security situation, the lack of progress on intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the pace of reconstruction. Gaza is facing a crushing financial crisis. Public sector employees remain unpaid. The impact of the conflict and of extreme poverty on Palestinians in Gaza has been severe. I urge the international community to support a second humanitarian payment to Palestinian

civil servants in Gaza as an integral part of the necessary and agreed crucial reforms.

I welcome ongoing efforts to promote Palestinian reconciliation. The Government of National Consensus must assume its leadership of Gaza, including control of border crossings. Until the crossings are fully reopened within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009), the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism shall continue to serve as a critical tool to alleviate the suffering of Gaza's people. To date, the Mechanism has enabled approximately 70 per cent of households in need of shelter repairs to procure the necessary materials. Additionally, 60 of 130 projects funded by the international community and the private sector have been approved by Israel, with six of these currently under way.

These are promising developments, yet the needs remain enormous. Despite the generosity of some donors, critical funding gaps threaten stability. Humanitarian agencies are struggling to raise the \$720 million needed for temporary shelters for 100,000 internally displaced people. Without immediate funding, the World Food Programme will be forced to suspend its food assistance to 95,000 Palestinians in Gaza by July. Gaza's water and energy supply is also perilously unstable, with no long-term solution in sight. I again urge donors to fulfil pledges made in Cairo last October.

In the West Bank, clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians

continue, along with the destruction of Palestinian-owned structures. Administrative detentions are increasing at an alarming pace, including the recent arrest of and charges against a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Such realities feed frustration and tension in a vicious cycle that undermines the path to peace. Both sides need to see more constructive actions, such as Israel's recent approval of a master plan for building 2,500 housing units and public buildings for the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem. Such steps can help to reduce pressure, but they also need to lead to tangible results.

The international community must do more to promote a return to negotiations that will end nearly half a century of occupation and allow two States, Israel and Palestine, to live side by side in security and peace. I am encouraged by current discussions among Member States. The United Nations is committed to supporting such efforts.

Both sides face difficult choices. But one choice stands above all others: whether to choose peace or the death, destruction and suffering that have defined the conflict for far too long. Too many lives have been lost, too many families have been destroyed, too many livelihoods have been shattered and too much distrust has been sown. Ultimately, the parties themselves must demonstrate the commitment and courage necessary to chart a viable course towards a better future.

## **VI. SECRETARY-GENERAL SUBMITS SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE GAZA BOARD OF INQUIRY**

*On 27 April 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon transmitted to the President of the Security Council a summary of the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014. The following are the recommendations contained in the summary (S/2015/286):*

### **Recommendations**

97. The terms of reference of the Board included making recommendations concerning any action that, in its opinion, should be taken by the United Nations, including actions or measures to avoid recurrence of the incidents. The Board made the following recommendations.

#### *Regarding safety and security*

98. In the light of its findings, noted above, on issues of safety and security, the Board recommended that:

(a) The United Nations should consider sending a team of experts to review the entire UNRWA security management system, with particular emphasis on conducting a detailed risk assessment for UNRWA operations in normal circumstances as well as in emergencies. The team should focus, inter alia, on the functioning of emergency operations rooms and the procedures for reporting incidents and on assisting in the review of security-related guidance documents applicable to UNRWA staff and premises. The team should also consider how to benefit from the standard-setting role of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security in addressing the safety and security challenges identified in the Board's report;

(b) The Office of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA should consolidate existing practices on neutrality into a framework document to ensure a consistent and coherent approach, agency-wide. This

framework document should take into consideration staff neutrality, premises/installations and assets, such as vehicles, and operations. It should also outline the roles and responsibilities for various aspects of neutrality, including approval, review and maintenance of relevant documentation. The mechanism for monitoring and handling of neutrality-related incidents should also be described;

(c) To improve the security of its schools and other installations in Gaza, UNRWA should consider developing standard guidelines inspired by the Organization's minimum operating security standards system. It should also consider increasing the number of guards serving on fixed-term appointments and enhance the training of an effective guard force, managed in shifts on a 24/7 basis;

(d) To assist the senior management in the UNWRA Field Office in Gaza to address issues of weapons, ammunition, unexploded ordnance and explosives found on United Nations premises, a weapons/ammunition and explosive expert should be posted permanently at the UNWRA Gaza Field Office;

(e) UNRWA should: develop agency-specific implementation plans for addressing situations in which weapons are discovered and their subsequent handling, taking into consideration agency-specific needs and the operating realities of each field office; assign roles and responsibilities

for carrying out these tasks; and ensure that staff are properly trained;

(f) UNRWA should operationalize the guidance provided by United Nations Headquarters on the handling of incidents involving weapons found in UNRWA facilities by drafting standard operating procedures that incorporate actions and responsibilities of staff, with clear lines of accountability, and mitigation measures with regard to the security of the UNRWA personnel concerned;

(g) UNRWA should consider changing the inspection process for UNRWA installations and strengthen the inspection regime by establishing an objective and effective inspection regime by international staff members such as Operations Support Officers, who should be in office during normal times as well as during times of conflict and who should be regarded as essential staff during emergencies. As for the quarterly inspections by Operations Support Officer teams, detailed guidelines should be designed to enhance institutional memory. Those procedures should clearly state the roles and responsibilities of each UNRWA staff member involved in the inspection process as well its monitoring;

(h) UNRWA should provide to its personnel tasked with managing shelters training on post-emergency confirmation of casualties and deaths caused during incidents occurring on its premises. It should also train personnel or recruit personnel with knowledge of how to conduct forensic investigations and collect evidence.

#### *Regarding communication and coordination*

99. In the light of its findings, noted above, on issues of communication and coordination, as well as information on

issues related to coordination of emergency response during Operation Cast Lead in 2009, the Board recommended that:

(a) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to further strengthen internal mechanisms, especially those within IDF, so as to ensure that United Nations personnel, operations and premises are not put at risk in the event of any future military operations affecting Gaza. The United Nations should further request the Government of Israel to establish a hotline for emergency coordination between the Director of Operations of UNRWA and the Commander of the IDF Southern Command. This would support the high-level coordination focal point, to whom the United Nations conveys the problems which it believes need to be addressed in respect of coordination and clearance arrangements in order to ensure the security of all United Nations personnel and premises and the safe continuation of United Nations operations, in Gaza;

(b) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to give a commitment that, at any time that it believes it has information that United Nations premises have been misused for military purposes or that UNRWA staff are involved in militant activities, such information will be promptly conveyed in strict confidence to the senior management of UNRWA or other United Nations entity, so that they can fulfil their responsibilities to investigate and take whatever action they may deem appropriate;

(c) The United Nations should request the Government of Israel to give a commitment that, in the event that it plans any future military operation in proximity to United Nations premises, it will provide advance warning, sufficient to enable the United Nations to ensure the security and safety of its personnel or other civilians

attending its facilities, and ensure that coordinating procedures are such that confusion or misunderstandings concerning UNRWA as well as other United Nations installations are excluded;

(d) With regard to coordination with IDF and building on positive steps already undertaken, the United Nations should continue to cultivate relations with the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and IDF at various levels. The capacity of the Organization's inter-agency Access Coordination Unit should be increased and coordinating structures changed in order to allow it to fulfil the role of primary United Nations focal point with the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration, augmented by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the UNRWA Safety and Security Division as required;

(e) The Secretary-General should send a team of experts to assess coordination structures in Gaza between the United Nations, non-United Nations entities and the Government of Israel and to assess and advise how command and control procedures within UNRWA and with external actors can be improved and strengthened. The assessment and advice should include the set-up, staffing and training of a joint operations room in the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the Safety and Security Division of UNRWA;

(f) UNRWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should make efforts to avoid establishing two parallel structures in Gaza during emergencies. There should be one joint structure in charge of all United Nations emergency response in Gaza. Appropriate arrangements for co-location of all relevant

United Nations staff during emergencies should also be made;

(g) The United Nations Department of Safety and Security senior management team should be reinforced as soon as possible;

(h) The United Nations should earmark a few military experts on mission in existing peacekeeping missions in the Middle East to augment the UNRWA Gaza Field Office and support UNRWA as duty officers in a joint operations room during crises. Regular exercises with area operations rooms should be organized;

(i) With regard to emergency management, the United Nations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should introduce and regularly conduct inter-agency training sessions and drills for staff expected to be involved in the coordination of United Nations operations. Staff should be identified for these tasks and be fully aware of their expected responsibilities as well as those of others. Area Chiefs should receive further training on security matters and how to manage their operations rooms in a professional manner. Area operations rooms should be prepared, equipped and trained for emergency security situations by a United Nations mobile training team.

#### *Regarding general issues*

100. The Board made the following general recommendations:

- The mandate of UNRWA is essentially humanitarian in nature. UNRWA conducts its activities through programmes in education, health, relief and social services. Its staff should not be involved in issues of weaponry, ammunition and unexploded ordnance, nor should it have to collect shrapnel from schools. It requires the further assistance of qualified and experienced

personnel, preferably with a military background, to support its staff.

- UNRWA international staff and senior local staff should as a matter of urgency

receive counselling to address potential post-traumatic stress disorder. These staff members have gone through very stressful events for a prolonged period of time.

## **VII. SECRETARY-GENERAL CONDEMNS BOMBARDMENT OF THE YARMOUK PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP IN SYRIA**

*On 29 April 2015, the following statement was issued by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (SG/SM/16720):*

The Secretary-General strongly condemns the shelling and aerial bombardment of the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus on 28 April despite assurances from the Syrian Government that the camp would not be attacked while civilians remained inside. Thousands of civilians in the camp are besieged by terrorist and other armed groups on the inside and Government forces on the outside.

The Secretary-General calls on the Government to immediately end any military operation that could endanger the lives of civilians in Yarmouk camp and abide strictly by its obligations under

international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians during armed conflict. He also calls on all parties to stop the violence so as to grant secure and sustained humanitarian access to civilians inside the camp.

The Secretary-General urges the Security Council and Member States with influence on the parties on the ground, including the Syrian Government, to do all in their power to protect civilian lives. The Government's adherence to commitments it has already made is critical to its role as an interlocutor for the international community.