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PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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

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I. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ORGANIZES THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM IN DAKAR

On 3 and 4 May 2016, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, with the support of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, held the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem in Dakar, Senegal. The theme of the Meeting was “Jerusalem at the Heart of the Settlement of the Question of Palestine”. The following is the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered at the Conference by Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, ([SG/SM/17728-GA/PAL/1363](#)), as well as the Chair’s Summary issued after the event:

Secretary-General’s message

I am pleased to send greetings to all the participants of the International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem. I thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, for organizing this event. I thank the Government of Senegal for hosting it.

In recent weeks, we have witnessed continuing clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. I condemn all such violence and attacks on civilians, which undermine prospects for a return to meaningful negotiations to end the nearly half-century occupation. I call on all sides to de-escalate tensions. I further reiterate calls on political, religious and community leaders to respect the sanctity of all holy sites, and remind all parties that the historical role of Jordan as custodian of the holy places should be respected.

The historic and holy city of Jerusalem remains at the heart of a peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine. Only through a negotiated solution can Jerusalem emerge as a capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all.

All parties should refrain from actions and provocations that could trigger further unrest and deepen mistrust. It is important

for all to uphold the status quo in word and in practice, in line with the recent understandings between Israel and Jordan.

Israel’s settlement enterprise, illegal under international law, continues in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and constitutes a significant obstacle to achieving peace. I urge Israel to cease and reverse such activities. I am also particularly concerned about the significant spike in demolitions since the start of the year, which contradicts Israel’s obligation to protect the civilian population under its occupation.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains of grave concern. All efforts should concentrate on helping the population in Gaza, still suffering from the consequences of the 2014 conflict: 74 per cent of affected families still await the reconstruction of their homes. Gaza’s chronic energy, water and employment needs also require urgent and sustained attention. Integrating the West Bank and Gaza under a single democratic Palestinian government through genuine Palestinian reconciliation, on the basis of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) principles, remains a key priority.

We must strengthen and reassert collective international efforts aimed at preserving the two-State solution and to shape a political horizon. These include the efforts of the Middle East Quartet as well as the French initiative to build international support towards creating the

conditions for the resumption of negotiations. Support by partners such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the African Union is a strong asset to ensure the viability and promise of an independent State of Palestine.

The United Nations and I personally remain committed to helping the parties bring the harsh, harmful and unjust occupation and this long-standing conflict to an end, in pursuit of the lasting vision of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

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

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

The **International Conference on the Question of Jerusalem** was convened in Dakar, Senegal, on 3 and 4 May 2016, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) and in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Government of Senegal. The Conference provided up-to-date information on the current security, socioeconomic and human rights situation in East Jerusalem under occupation. It identified opportunities to intensify international support for resilience, protection and development for Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. It further provided a platform for an open exchange on possible solutions and scenarios for a just and lasting settlement of the question of Jerusalem, taking stock of approaches to the question of Jerusalem in previous rounds of negotiations and other proposals.

The Conference was attended by 42 Member States, two Observer States, three intergovernmental organizations, three UN system entities, and 34 local and international civil society organizations. Thirteen expert speakers addressed the

Conference and 28 media entities/outlets covered the Conference proceedings. The Conference was open to the public. During the course of the interactive discussions with the panelists at the end of each plenary, a large number of participants made remarks or raised issues.

At the opening session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, in his message to the Conference delivered by Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS), underscored that the historic and holy city of Jerusalem remained at the heart of a peaceful settlement of the Question of Palestine. Only through a negotiated solution could Jerusalem emerge as a capital of two States, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all. The Secretary-General called on political, religious and community leaders to de-escalate tensions and respect the sanctity of holy sites. He condemned all violence as well as the continued Israeli settlement enterprise and spike in demolitions that constituted a significant obstacle to achieving peace. Expressing grave concern for the humanitarian situation in Gaza, he called for strengthening collective international efforts aimed at preserving the two-state solution, including those of the Quartet as well as the French Initiative, in cooperation with regional partners.

The **Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Samir Bakr**, recalled that Jerusalem was the core of the conflict and foremost among the priorities and political actions of the OIC. Israel's plans to "Judaize" the city had recently seen a major increase and included recurrent attacks against Muslim and Christian holy sites as well as the confiscation of Palestinian lands. Warning against provocations that would take the conflict to a "religious dimension", he said the continuation of Israeli settlement

construction in spite of international condemnation constituted a flagrant violation of international norms. Referring to the outcome of the Fifth Extraordinary Summit of the OIC on Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, held in Jakarta on 7 March 2016, he said that, among other things, participants had expressed support for the French Initiative to establish an international support group and to hold an international peace conference as a basis for the political process.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, H.E. Mr. Riad Al Malki, observed that Palestine had been a standing item on the United Nations agenda since its inception - a signal of the international community's inability to take the necessary action to bring about a solution. He added that a humanitarian crisis was unfolding in the Gaza Strip as civilians continued to suffer from a prolonged and unjustified siege. The solution to the Question of Palestine was crystal clear, enjoyed universal support and could be found in numerous Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions. The Minister insisted that any peace initiative must have as its basis United Nations resolutions, the Madrid Principles and the Arab Peace Initiative; must be based on 1967 borders and aimed at ending the occupation of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. The two-state solution was the hope for peace in the region. Expressing support for the French Initiative, he particularly called on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities by addressing the settlements issue. Calling on States to deepen relations with the city and for the creation of an "international coalition for Jerusalem", he noted that there was no two-state solution possible without East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

The Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Palestinian and the Arab Occupied Territories Sector of the

League of Arab States, H.E. Said Abu Ali, said the situation in Jerusalem was becoming more complicated due to Israel's "Judaization" scheme known as "Jerusalem 2020". The settlement policy all over the Occupied Territories threatened prospects for peace and represented a violation of relevant international decisions. The League of Arab States was exerting all possible efforts to provide protection to the Palestinian people and their holy sites and to help establish an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. Meanwhile, the Security Council should carry out its responsibility effectively to put an end to the settlement policy and to provide the necessary security for civilians, while working in earnest to put an end to the occupation itself.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of Senegal, H.E. Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, observed that his country was hosting the International Conference against the backdrop of continuing Israeli settlement activity which had increased by 250 per cent in the first quarter of 2016, the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, and the absence of any clear political horizons. He warned that the upsurge in violence could jeopardize the efficacy of a number of new tools adopted by the international community — the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on development financing. He hailed the fact that the themes of the present Conference dealt with resilience and development that could be addressed from the angle of sustainable development. He further welcomed the activities of the Committee's Working Group on NGOs and invited African civil society to serve the Palestinian cause. Finally, he invited the Committee to continue its watchdog functions and its sensitization work.

In the ensuing sessions, participants discussed the situation in divided

Jerusalem and described a reality in which Israel implemented discriminatory policies to weaken the Palestinian presence and identity. It was noted that “Judaization” of the city had begun long before 1967. It was amplified following the occupation as Israel expanded the boundaries of Jerusalem municipality, including through the policy of land confiscations, residency revocations and demolition of Palestinian homes, with few building permits issued to Palestinians compared to those given to Israeli illegal settlements. In today’s Jerusalem, Palestinian residents held only 13 per cent of the land they had access to in 1967. The existence of this “state of acute disequilibrium”, one that denied the right to any significant political expression and permitted collective punishment, was at the root of the current uprising involving the Palestinian youth. There was no greater threat to the Israeli people than occupation, and two-state solution offered the only way to liberate not only Palestine but also Israel from the disaster confronting it.

Exploring concrete opportunities to intensify **international support for resilience, protection and development in East Jerusalem**, speakers focused on living conditions in East Jerusalem, the subjection of Palestinians to Israeli laws in all areas of their life and the increased rates of poverty and unemployment in Jerusalem as a result of the ‘Israeli siege’. While some participants explored ways that development could be used to reverse the negative impact of the Israeli occupation, others pointed to the absence of the city in the Palestinian Government development plans for 2014-2016 since the prevailing approach took the Israeli occupation as a ‘given’. A strong case was made to rethink the development approach and embed it in the larger Palestinian liberation struggle against Israel’s occupation. The international community had an important role to play in the development of East Jerusalem and in

promoting economic and employment opportunities for Palestinians. It should also sever cooperation with Israel, ban settlement products and impose sanctions, given Israel’s human rights record towards Palestinians, a participant stated.

The Conference then considered old and new **approaches to end the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian stalemate on the question of Jerusalem** within the larger context of preserving the two-state solution, with East Jerusalem as the future capital of the Palestinian State. It was pointed out that Jerusalem was a microcosm of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict and had to be addressed first and not last in negotiations. Furthermore, the holy sites remained at the core of the question of Jerusalem to this day and previous approaches had failed because they had side-lined the issue. Similarly, the ‘Clinton Parameters’ that had proposed Jewish neighbourhoods under Israeli sovereignty and Arab neighbourhoods under Palestinian sovereignty, were not viable due to the city’s geographic layout and disputes over what constituted Jewish and Arab neighbourhoods. Any compromise on the question of Jerusalem had to be entertained only within the context of the entire negotiation framework, and not on the basis of a piecemeal approach. Failing to resolve the status of Jerusalem, however, would continue to fuel the despair and violence, particularly among the Palestinian youth.

In closing remarks, the **Chairman of the CEIRPP, Ambassador Fodé Seck**, said discussions had demonstrated the commitment of the participants to the Palestinian cause. In particular, Senegalese civil society had been well represented at the Conference. He invited the representatives to become accredited with the Committee in order to continue their involvement in the future.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations,

Ambassador Riyad Mansour, recognized the contribution of Senegal in chairing the Committee over the past 40 years and efforts of the participants to highlight the struggle and determination of Palestinians to end the Israeli occupation. Noting that the Occupied Palestinian Territory was worse off than it had been 23 years ago when negotiations began, he said that the Palestinians were fed up with empty promises from the international community and saw the need to 'shift gears'. He called on the Security Council to put an end to the illegal occupation and to allow the French Initiative to stand on its feet.

The Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of Senegal, H.E. Coly Seck,

thanking the organizers as well as participants from civil society, observed that the International Conference had been the first of its kind in Africa. The meeting had illustrated the critical nature of the question of Jerusalem in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He hailed the quality of the presentations and testimonies as well as the subsequent discussions that offered practical proposals to end the occupation and resolve the question of Jerusalem. Reiterating his country's full support for the Palestinian people, he went on to call on all States to defend the 'fair' Palestinian cause and on the Security Council to take action to end the occupation and to allow for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

II. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON SECURITY INCIDENTS ALONG THE BORDER WITH GAZA

On 4 May 2016, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, issued the following [statement](#) on security incidents along the border with Gaza:

"I am concerned about the security incidents that have taken place along the border with Gaza over the past 24 hours.

I call upon all to exercise maximum restraint and to take all necessary action to

prevent the risk of escalation. It is critical that peace be maintained to ensure the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians, alike."

III. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES SPECIAL MEETING ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF UNRWA

On 4 May, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made the following remarks at a special meeting on the sustainability of UNRWA ([SG/SM/17732-PAL/2201-REF/1229](#)):

Thank you for taking part in this important meeting. The unresolved plight of Palestine refugees — a community of 5.2 million people — is a great source of pain to me, as I know it is for you. In today's precarious Middle East, Palestine refugees are especially vulnerable. The places where they reside are either overwhelmed by conflict or heavily

stretched by the spillover effects from neighbouring areas.

It is against this unstable background that UNRWA and its 30,000 staff provide vital human development and emergency relief services to Palestine refugees. It is vital, first and foremost, to the refugees themselves, in providing education, health, social services, protection, dignity and a

chance in life. It is also vital because UNRWA plays a stabilizing role in supporting Palestine refugees in a volatile region.

Who would support Palestine refugees — a poor, vulnerable but remarkably resilient community — in the absence of UNRWA? There is no doubt that sustaining UNRWA's operations for Palestine refugees is in our collective interest. Yet, barely nine months after my appeal to the General Assembly for UNRWA support, the Agency is again in dire need of resources.

Of course, this is not a one-way conversation. Donors have supported UNRWA over many years and need to be confident that it continues to operate efficiently and effectively, and that tough measures are being taken to deepen efficiencies. UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl will speak to these issues in detail.

At the same time, UNRWA continues to advance the universal values of the United Nations. I will never forget my visit to Gaza shortly after the end of the devastating conflict in the summer of 2014. I saw first-hand how UNRWA's 252 schools went from providing quality education to 240,000 children, to offering sanctuary to 300,000 displaced in Gaza. Soon after hostilities ceased, UNRWA schools were remarkably up and running with barely a delay to the academic year.

I encourage you to reflect on the human dimension of Palestine refugees — their hopes, dreams and quest for justice and dignity. As my report to the World Humanitarian Summit states, there is “one humanity”, and we share a collective responsibility to protect, support and sustain that humanity. UNRWA has been a pioneer in providing education in emergencies, a key theme of the World Humanitarian Summit, and has developed innovative distance-learning techniques

and “safe spaces” to ensure education for Palestine refugee girls and boys. UNRWA is also rebuilding Palestine refugee homes and communities shattered by the conflict in Gaza and will be asked to do the same in Syria whenever the conflict ends there.

In March, I saw for myself UNRWA's extraordinary work in Lebanon. I visited the Nahr el Barad camp, destroyed in 2007, and witnessed the progress to rebuild it. Yet, over half of the refugees displaced there still have no homes. I am pleased that Austria is hosting a meeting later today with partners to seek the necessary support so that UNRWA can complete the rebuilding of the camp.

I appeal to you today to do your utmost to support and sustain UNRWA in its work. The current deficit of \$81 million must be overcome as a matter of priority for 2016. The budget uncertainties are a costly distraction. They play with the fate of people who are already living on the edge. They add a needless extra layer of suffering and anguish. It is far more financially responsible to put UNRWA on a sustainable footing. This is not only good management, it will also allow people to better plan their lives under the intense stress that they already endure each and every day.

In practical terms what would sustainability mean? It would mean Palestine refugees never having to question whether UNRWA schools would be open; never doubting whether crucial medical services would be available; or whether the food would be on the table for dinner.

Let us never forget the human consequences if we let Palestine refugees down: more young people driven into despair; an increased risk of extremism; more poverty, loss of hope and dignity; and a Middle East region even more riven by conflict.

As we continue the search for a just and lasting solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, in conformity with

international law and United Nations resolutions, I count on your support for UNRWA.

IV. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES UNITED NATIONS-ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION JOINT MEETING IN GENEVA

The following is the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered at the United Nations-Organization of Islamic Cooperation Meeting in Geneva on 11 May, 2016 by Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs ([SG/SM/17744](#)):

I am pleased to send greetings to the General Cooperation Meeting between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This meeting is testament to the commitment of both our organizations to combine our efforts to tackle global challenges.

...

I welcome the OIC's continued support for establishing lasting peace and security for Palestine and Israel based on the two-State solution. This has never been more urgent. The Extraordinary OIC Summit on Palestine and Al-Quds al-Sharif in Jakarta last March was an important initiative.

...

V. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ISSUES REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

On 13 May, the Secretary-General issued his report entitled "Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict". The following are excerpts from the report ([S/2016/447](#)):

...

11. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the construction of illegal settlements continued in 2015, resulting in the loss of property and sources of livelihood, threats to physical security and restrictions on access to services, as addressed in my most recent report on the subject ([A/HRC/31/43](#)). The destruction of Palestinian homes and structures displaced 781 people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A new wave of attacks and violence began in October 2015 in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, leaving at least 141 Palestinians, 22 Israelis and 2 foreign nationals dead as at the end of 2015.

...

Accountability is crucial to deterring violations, promoting reconciliation and providing justice for victims

In the occupied Palestinian territory, 18 months after the hostilities in Gaza in 2014, during which some 1,500 Palestinian civilians, 4 Israeli civilians and 1 foreign national were killed and nearly 18,000 homes were severely damaged or destroyed, accountability measures remained inadequate, notwithstanding the finding of the independent commission of inquiry that serious violations, possibly amounting to war crimes, might have been committed (see [A/HRC/29/52](#)).

...

22. International investigative and judicial mechanisms, including fact-finding missions, commissions of inquiry and the International Criminal Court, provide complementary avenues towards accountability where national options

prove insufficient. In 2015, the United Nations supported commissions of inquiry into Eritrea, the occupied Palestinian territory and the Syrian Arab Republic,

...

Greater efforts are needed to protect civilians from explosive weapons in populated areas

...

In the occupied Palestinian territory, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that only 30 per cent of the 7,000 explosive remnants of war estimated to remain from the

hostilities in Gaza in the second quarter of 2014 had been confirmed as removed.

...

Collective action is needed to address forced displacement

...

In Gaza, some 90,000 people remained displaced from the hostilities of 2014, while throughout the region many of the 5 million Palestine refugees became increasingly vulnerable as a result of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

...

VI. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES MEETING ON UNITED NATIONS-LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES COOPERATION

On 17 May 2016, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Taye-Brook Zerihoun delivered a message on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the thirteenth General Meeting of Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States. The following is an excerpt from that message ([SG/SM/17755](#)):

...

Establishing lasting peace and security for Palestine and Israel based on the two-State solution has never been more urgent. I welcome the League of Arab States' efforts on this issue, particularly in

promoting the [Arab Peace Initiative](#). I count on all League of Arab States members to continue to support this enormous task, particularly those who have pledged funding for Gaza's reconstruction.

...

VII. UN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAEL'S CONFISCATION OF DONOR-FUNDED HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

On 18 May 2016, the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Robert Piper, issued the following [statement](#) expressing his concern over the demolition and confiscation of donor-funded humanitarian assistance by the Israeli authorities in the Palestinian community of Jabal al Baba:

On 16 May, the authorities demolished seven homes and confiscated materials for three other ones. Nine Palestine refugee families, comprising 49 members were left without shelter as a result, 22 of them children. The materials were part of a

humanitarian aid package for vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin families, provided by the UN's Humanitarian Pooled Fund earlier this year.

"Despite the obligation on Israel under international law to facilitate rapid and

unimpeded passage of relief to those who need it, humanitarian relief to vulnerable communities like Jabal al Baba is increasingly under attack,” said Mr. Piper.

Jabal al Baba, located to the east of Jerusalem in an area planned for the expansion of the Ma’ale Adumim settlement (the E1 plan), is one of 46 communities in the central West Bank considered at high risk of forcible transfer. The destruction of homes and of livelihoods creates pressures on households to move, exacerbating the risk

of forcible transfer which would be considered a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Over 600 structures have been demolished or confiscated across the West Bank already in 2016, far exceeding the total for all of 2015. In their wake, over 900 people have been displaced from their homes and a further 2,500 have seen their livelihoods affected.

“Once again, we call on Israel to respect the rights of these vulnerable communities and to leave these households in peace,” said Mr. Piper.

VIII. WHO REPORTS ON HEALTH CONDITIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

On 18 May 2016, the Secretariat of the World Health Organization issued a report on “Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan”, prepared for the 69th World Health Assembly. The following are excerpts from the report ([A69/44](#)):

1. In 2015, the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly adopted decision WHA68(8), which requested the Director-General, inter alia, to report on the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly. This report responds to that request.

2. The estimated population living in the occupied Palestinian territory in 2015 was 4.75 million: 2.90 million in the West Bank (61.0%) and 1.85 million (39.0%) in the Gaza Strip).¹ Two million are registered refugees, of whom 800 000 live in refugee camps, 19 located in the West Bank and eight in the Gaza Strip.² The population is predominantly youthful; 39.4% of Palestinians are aged 0-14 years (37.0% in the West Bank and 42.8% in the Gaza Strip), and 2.8% are 65 years or

older.³ There has been an increase in the median age over a generation, from 16.4 years in 2000 to 19.8 years in 2015.⁴

3. The Palestinian economy has been in decline since 2012 and contracted further following the conflict in the Gaza Strip in mid-2014. In early 2015, gross domestic product was still lower than in the previous year. Real gross domestic product per person has been shrinking since 2013. Unemployment among youth in the Gaza Strip exceeds 60%, and 25% of Palestinians currently live in poverty. Full implementation and updating of Palestinian—Israeli economic agreements, an increase in donor aid to the Palestinian Authority and fiscal reforms are needed to improve Palestinian economic health and prevent another year with a financing gap.⁵

¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2176.pdf>, p. 19, accessed 12 April 2016).

² See www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/ (accessed 12 April 2016).

³ http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang_en/881/default.aspx#Population (accessed 12 April 2016).

⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2176.pdf>, accessed 12 April 2016).

⁵ World Bank. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, September 29, 2015 (<http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/>

4. The estimated poverty rate in the occupied Palestinian territory overall was 25% in 2014, but diverged sharply by region: 39% in the Gaza Strip and 16% in the West Bank.⁶ Altogether 2.3 million Palestinians are in need of humanitarian assistance (including 1.2 million refugees), and 1.6 million experience food insecurity.⁷

5. In 2015, the number of fatalities of Palestinians from military occupation and security violence totalled 170,⁸ of which 152 occurred within the occupied Palestinian territory (25 in the Gaza Strip);⁹ the number of injured totalled 15 377, of which 14 925 occurred in the occupied Palestinian territory (1375 in the Gaza Strip).⁸ Of all injuries, 39% were from live and rubber-coated metal ammunition and 61% from tear gas inhalation and other causes.⁸ During the year, 85% of fatalities and 65% of injuries of Palestinians from military occupation violence occurred after 1 October.^{7,10} The scale of violence in the West Bank reached the highest recorded by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in a single year since it began monitoring in 2005.

6. In October barricades were erected near the entrances to the Palestinian hospitals in east Jerusalem. West Bank health facilities reported ten incidents of

incursions by security forces in 2015. One fatality occurred in a patient's room in a West Bank hospital during the course of an arrest operation of a patient by security forces.¹¹

7. In the West Bank including east Jerusalem, one quarter of the population (668 000) live in five areas where they are particularly vulnerable to social isolation, residency and planning restrictions, house demolitions and forced displacement, reduced access to Palestinian services, confrontations with Israeli military forces and settlers, and the threat of violence.

8. Access to health services is restricted by the wall and checkpoints, which prevent patients, health personnel and ambulances from directly accessing major Palestinian referral hospitals located in east Jerusalem. For Palestinians from the West Bank — excluding east Jerusalem — and the Gaza Strip, access to east Jerusalem referral medical centres is only possible after obtaining a permit issued by the Israeli authorities, a complex process that can result in delays and denial of care.

9. Patients from the Gaza Strip seeking specialized health care have been significantly affected since 2013 by the closure of the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, one of only two exit points for its residents, and the most important for private patients for travel and cost reasons. Only 178 patients were able to exit through Rafah in 2015 owing to the closed borders.¹²

10. Access to health services for the 5936 Palestinian prisoners¹³ from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in detention and

[IB/2015/09/29/090224b08310e894/2_0/Rendered/PDF/mainOreport.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/press_release_170_palestinians_and_26_israelis_killed_in_2015_english.pdf) accessed 12 April 2016).

⁶ World Bank. Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, September 29, 2015 (http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/09/29/090224b08310e894/2_0/Rendered/PDF/mainOreport.pdf, accessed 12 April 2016).

⁷ Humanitarian Response Plan, occupied Palestinian territory (January–December 2016) (https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/2016_hrp_22_january%202016.pdf, accessed 28 January, 2016).

⁸ http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/press_release_170_palestinians_and_26_israelis_killed_in_2015_english.pdf (accessed 8 February, 2016).

⁹ <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc26january-2february-2016.aspx> (accessed 8 February, 2016).

¹⁰ <http://www.ochaopt.org/poc26january-2february-2016.aspx> (accessed 8 February, 2016) and http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_Sitrep_on_oPt_health_attacks_12.2015_-_final.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 8 February, 2016).

¹¹ http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_Sitrep_on_oPt_health_attacks_12.2015_-_final.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 8 February, 2016).

¹² Communication from Rafah terminal officials, February 2016.

¹³ The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Statistics on Palestinians in the custody of Israeli security forces (http://www.btselem.org/statistics/detainees_and_prisoners, accessed 27 January 2016).

prison facilities in Israel, and for Palestinians held in Israeli military facilities in the West Bank, lacks transparency and supervision by the Israeli Ministry of Health, and independent external physicians lack timely or sufficient access. WHO co-signed a United Nations Joint Statement in 2015 warning against forced feeding and bringing attention to ethical issues in the treatment of hunger strikers.¹⁴

11. The Palestinian Ministry of Health, UNRWA, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector together provide geographical coverage of primary and hospital-level health services. However, the financial crisis affecting the Palestinian Authority continued to have a serious impact on the scope and quality of the health ministry's services. Budget shortfalls have resulted in chronically high shortages of essential medicines and medical disposables in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with average shortages of medicines of between 20% and 30% in 2015, prompting an increase in referrals of patients to outside care.¹⁵ The restrictions imposed on the movement of health staff¹⁶ and goods hinder the overall functioning and development of the health system. Health services have been disrupted by frequent strikes by health workers and stoppages by health suppliers.

12. The burden of noncommunicable diseases is high in the occupied Palestinian territory, where the leading causes of death remain cardiovascular disease, cancer, cerebrovascular diseases and diabetes,¹⁷ and the prevalence of related risk factors (smoking, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity) is high. Chronic disease and its

complications also represent a high proportion of referrals by the Ministry of Health in both number and cost.

13. In 2013, the infant mortality rate was 12.9 deaths per 1000 live births and the under-5 mortality rate was 15.5 deaths per 1000, a significant improvement over the respectively 2005 rates of 20.8 deaths per 1000 live births and 24.6 deaths per 1000.¹⁸ More recent partial and preliminary data have been a cause for concern: according to the final report of the Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, the infant mortality rate and under-5 mortality rate in 2015 were higher than the rates in 2013 (18 deaths per 1000 live birth and 22 deaths per 1000 live births, respectively).¹⁹

14. Life expectancy increased overall to 73.5 years, higher in the West Bank (73.9) than in the Gaza Strip (72.9) and higher for females in both regions (75.0) than for males (72.0).²⁰

15. The prevalence of disability was 2.7% in the West Bank and 2.4% in the Gaza Strip.²¹ Disabilities increased notably in the Gaza Strip in 2014 as a result of the large number of persons with traumatic injuries, including more than 100 amputations, resulting from the conflict in July-August 2014. An increase in the burden of mental and psychosocial disorders can be expected in a population experiencing prolonged occupation, lack

¹⁴ <http://www.emro.who.int/pse/palestine-news/un-joint-statement-on-new-israeli-law-on-force-feeding-of-detainees.html> (accessed 13 April 2016).

¹⁵ Ministry of Health communications to WHO for the Gaza Strip (2015) and for the West Bank (2016).

¹⁶ <http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/procedure%20s/genera1/50en.pdf>, para 10 (accessed 26 January 2016).

¹⁷ State of Palestine Ministry of Health, Health annual report, Palestine 2014.

¹⁸ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015. Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Final Report, Ramallah, Palestine.

¹⁹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015. Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Final Report December 2015, Ramallah, Palestine (https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/Middle%20East%20and%20North%20Africa/State%20oPY020Palestine/2014/Final/State%20oPY020Palestine%202014%20MICS_English.pdf, accessed 12 April 2016).

²⁰ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2176.pdf>, p. 21, accessed 2 February 2016).

²¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1165&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>, accessed 5 February 2016).

of personal security, severe restrictions on movement and violations of human rights, including displacement in a post-conflict situation.

16. Both the quality and quantity of water supplied are problematic in the occupied Palestinian territory. According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, the proportion of the population served by piped water services dropped from 88% in 1995 to 56% in 2015; the steepest decline of any country during this period.²² In the Gaza Strip²³ faecal indicator bacteria have been detected in a high proportion²⁴ of the sampled drinking-water supplies, for example in desalinization plants, tanker trucks and in individual reservoirs. Bacterial contaminants enter the system at the source, in supply lines or delivery methods, and through contamination at the household level. The coastal aquifer is well below ideal levels, threatened by overuse and contaminated from improperly treated wastewater. Some mitigation measures are already in place, but in the long term the entire watershed of the aquifer is at risk of contamination. The shortage of available testing capacities and

materials in the Gaza Strip, particularly for testing for viruses and chemical contaminants including pesticides, impedes water quality analysis and documentation of the potential impact of poor water quality on human health. Wastewater treatment capacity is inadequate, with untreated sewage overflows resulting in contamination of coastal seawater.²⁵

17. About 60% of wells, 20% of hospital water reservoirs and 20% of bottled water inside the West Bank contained at least some bacterial coliforms at some point in the previous year.²⁶ Monitoring of the water supply is in place, but lack of resources and poor infrastructure make mitigation and improvement measures lengthy or impossible.²⁷ The infrastructure for wastewater treatment is also largely inadequate. Further research is urgently required to improve the scientific understanding of the short- and long-term health effects of the poor water supply and wastewater systems in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

²² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. Palestine country file. June 2015. http://www.wssinfo.org/documents/?Ix_displaycontroller%5BRegion%5D=&tx_displaycontroller%5Bsearch_word%5D=Palestine&Ix_displaycontroller%5Btype%5D=country_files

²³ Internal reports, Department of Environmental Health, Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health.

²⁴ Internal reports, Palestinian Water Authority & Coastal Municipalities Water Utility.

²⁵ Internal reports, Department of Environmental Health, Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health.

²⁶ Hilles, A H, Al Hindi, A I, Abu Safieh, YA. Assessment of parasitic pollution in the coastal seawater of Gaza city. *Journal of Environmental Health Science and Engineering*. 2014;12:26 (<http://doi.org/10.1186/2052-336X-12-26>, accessed 2 May 2016).

²⁷ Selby, J. (2013). Cooperation, domination and colonisation: The Israeli—Palestinian joint water committee. *Water Alternatives*, [6\(1\):1-10](https://doi.org/10.1080/10402009.2014.941111). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402009.2014.941111> (accessed 12 April 2016).

IX. PALESTINIAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE ORGANIZES UN SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

On 19 and 20 May 2016, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People held the UN Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in Stockholm, Sweden. The theme of the Meeting was “Agenda 2030: Paving the way towards a peaceful, independent and sustainable State of Palestine”. The following is the [Chair’s Summary](#) which was issued after the [event](#):

The **Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People**, entitled “*Agenda 2030: Paving the Way toward a Peaceful, Independent and Sustainable State of Palestine*”, was organized in Stockholm, Sweden, on 19-20 May, by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). The Seminar examined the challenges and constraints of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 by the State of Palestine under occupation, including how the Palestinian decision-makers and partners could use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as “accelerators” for transitioning from dependence on humanitarian assistance to a sustainable, peaceful and independent State.

During the Seminar, representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, UN system entities, civil society organizations, together with expert speakers from Palestine, other countries and the United Nations, explored ways of building resilient and sustainable economic growth in Palestine within the larger political context of the occupation and liberation struggle. The proceedings of the Seminar were open to the public and covered by media.

At the opening session, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, in his message to the Seminar delivered by Mr. Robert Piper, Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, underscored that connecting development efforts to humanitarian

action, human rights and the advancement of the peace process was critical for progress. It was incumbent upon the international community to do everything possible to re-establish a political horizon that would lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The **Director of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Mr. Mats Karlsson**, representing the host country Sweden, noted that Palestine had a right to self-determination and the ability to shape its future. Unfortunately, recent developments, including settlement expansion and demolition of unprecedented numbers of Palestinian homes by Israel, increasingly put the two-State solution – the only path to security and stability for the Middle East – at risk. The situation in Gaza remained particularly critical. He announced that Sweden’s Government planned to increase bilateral support to Palestine by 50 per cent over the next four years, including support to Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, to total of US\$100 million per year.

The **Vice-Chairman of the Committee, H.E. Ambassador Rodolfo Reyes Rodríguez**, recalling the mandate of the Committee to raise awareness and garner support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, noted that the Agenda 2030 would need to be implemented while the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in particular, continued to require humanitarian assistance. The best

humanitarian assistance would be that which seamlessly segued into sustainable development and provided a bright outlook into the future.

The **Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer**, avowed that the Palestinian people had the will and determination to take the bold and transformative steps that were urgently needed to shift towards a sustainable and resilient path. He reported that the Government of Palestine was working on its National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 and had formed a National Team which was committed to achieving the SDGs as a means to strengthening ‘peace in larger freedom’. However, he questioned how the Palestinian people could holistically pursue the ambitious development agenda without sovereignty, respect for human and economic rights, or the ability to control their own natural resources and lands.

In the **ensuing sessions**, participants reiterated support for the two-state solution and the 2030 Agenda with its promise to “leave no one behind”. It was underscored that the latter placed an onus on the international community to support nationally-owned socio-economic development of the Palestinian people and their efforts to establish a free Palestinian state.

Examining various models to address **challenges and constraints of implementation of SDGs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**, some participants considered it simply “inconceivable” that Palestine would be able to achieve the SDGs while under Israeli occupation; ending the occupation would be a prerequisite for any meaningful development. While acknowledging the resiliency of the Palestinian people and progress made in social areas, it was noted that the economic situation in Palestine lagged far behind social development

achievements, and given the continued occupation of the Territory, there was a real risk that even those gains would be lost. The State of Palestine was committed to Agenda 2030 but the international community had to be realistic about what could and could not be achieved in terms of the implementation of the SDGs that were inherently political in nature. The situation on the ground demanded that development in Palestine be based on an economic, political and social process of resistance to Israel’s occupation, which was the leading cause of the development challenges, and aimed at building a productive Palestinian State that was less reliant on Israel and foreign assistance.

The Seminar then considered the role of youth and women as key to **enabling sustainable solutions for a dignified future**. Participants observed that although the reality of Palestine was full of violence, repressive policies, collective punishment and restrictions on movement, young Palestinians were keen to acquire knowledge in every possible way. However, job opportunities for graduates inside and outside Palestine were limited. The percentage of females in Palestinian universities had reached about 58 per cent but women’s participation in the labour force was at 19.4 per cent, the lowest in the Arab world. It was emphasized that economic, environmental and social issues viewed through the lens of gender would present serious challenges to Palestine’s sustainable development objectives. Concern was expressed that many media organizations, particularly in the United States, portrayed female Palestinians as a homogenous group of oppressed women and Palestinian men as tyrants and religious extremists, possibly as part of a strategy to support problematic foreign policy interventions in the region. The stereotypes of Palestinians could be broken down through positive messaging in documentaries and other media efforts rooted in a long-term vision of the

everyday struggles of life in Palestine. Moving forward, policy priorities should include ending the occupation, providing compensation for economic losses, increasing the availability of psycho-social support and enhancing opportunities for decent work and education that emphasized non-violence and trust-building.

In the final plenary session on **strengthening global partnerships for reconstruction and sustainable development**, participants stressed that Palestine was nearing the breaking point and the current state of affairs could not continue. The year 2017 would mark 50 years of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and “crime of aggression”. The blockade had created a state of siege in Gaza, unprecedented social and economic suffering for millions of people, and dependence on international aid. **SDG Goal 16** related to access to justice and it was illogical to think that development objective could be achieved while under occupation. The key pre-condition to effective partnerships and support to Palestine was political intervention to end the occupation and secure the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, under international conventions, Israel as the occupying power was obliged to ensure the welfare of the occupied population and the development of the occupied territory. Expressing concern about other situations of injustice around the world, participants stressed that there could be no double standards whereby the international community felt it acceptable to ignore the plight of the Palestinian people. It was also noted that while it was much appreciated and needed, the provision of aid could not become a substitute for a clear stance against Israeli occupation of Palestine. In this context, it was recalled that Sweden had committed to the achievement of a democratic,

independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State and ensuring that the rights and needs of Palestinians were met.

In closing remarks, the **Minister for Social Development of the State of Palestine, H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Alshaer**, said that the discussions at the Seminar showed that there was almost universal international agreement that Israel’s continued occupation was the major obstacle to Palestine’s quest for sustainable development. He called for concrete, action-oriented measures that would deliver confidence and trust in the sustainable development process in Palestine. The Government of Palestine was committed to the SDGs, which presented huge challenges not just for Palestine, but for the whole of the international community. Robust, effective and transparent follow up support was needed to ensure that no one was left behind.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Riyad Mansour, reiterated that it would not be possible for Palestine to achieve sustainable development while under occupation. Referring to the speakers from Palestine, he noted that they were “shining examples” of the spirit of the Palestinian people, particularly the women that had taken part. However, the discussions had also reflected the high degree of frustration that was being felt by the Palestinian people. He warned that the situation in Palestine teetered on the verge of a very critical moment that could lead to a series of unpredictable consequences. Palestine was a serious, responsible State that was participating in shaping issues of worldwide concern, including the global development agenda. He carried a message and request from Palestine to the rest of the world: “Deal with our issue in a very practical and realistic manner”.

X. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE RESUMPTION OF THE PRIVATE IMPORT OF CEMENT INTO GAZA

The following [statement](#) was issued on 23 May, 2016 by Nickolay Mladenov, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, on the resumption of the private import of cement into Gaza:

“I welcome the decision to resume the private import of cement into Gaza after nearly 45 days of suspension. This has become possible because of the efforts by both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. All sides need to ensure that cement deliveries reach their intended beneficiaries and are used solely for civilian purposes.

The humanitarian challenges in Gaza remain vast and all efforts should be made to resolve the housing, electricity and water crises. It is critical for the security of

both Palestinians and Israelis that Gaza remains calm and hope is restored to its people.

The United Nations continues to call for the full lifting of all closures on Gaza, as envisioned in Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009). A permanent end to the suffering of the Palestinian people can only be achieved through reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian national authority and the realization of the two-state solution.”

XI. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

On 25 May 2016, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed the Security Council on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The following are excerpts from the briefing ([S/PV.7697](#)):

...

Over the past decades, a broad consensus has been built around the understanding that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can only be resolved through negotiations and on the basis of a two-State solution. That consensus is at the core of the work of the Middle East Quartet, which continues to work with the parties and the region to bring about the necessary conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations. The Quartet is also finalizing its first report on the impediments to the two-State solution and the way forward. In a matter of days, a number of countries and the Secretary-General will come together in Paris to reaffirm their commitment to a negotiated

two-State solution and to discuss how they can constructively support both parties in achieving that goal.

All those efforts, as important as they are, cannot be divorced from the stark reality on the ground that is affecting the lives of Palestinians and Israelis alike. Despite the general downward trend in violence, on 18 April a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian teenager detonated a bomb on a bus in Jerusalem, injuring 21 people, several of them seriously. I welcome President Abbas’ firm rejection of that brutal attack. It is deplorable, however, that some Palestinian factions chose instead to praise it. The United Nations is firmly convinced that there can never be, under any circumstances, justification for

terror. Days later, on 27 April, a pregnant, 23-year-old Palestinian mother and her 16-year-old brother were tragically shot and killed under questionable circumstances at a checkpoint close to Jerusalem, reportedly by Israeli private security contractors, after allegedly attempting to carry out a knife attack against security forces. However, Palestinian eyewitnesses refute that claim, and the case has once again raised concerns about the need to calibrate the use of force. I note that Israeli authorities have initiated an investigation, and I encourage them to conduct it in a swift and transparent manner.

The beginning of May saw the biggest escalation in violence between Israel and Hamas since the 2014 conflict. Two tunnels were discovered, and Israel carried out 14 incursions into Gaza in order to destroy them and seek out others. In the violent exchanges that followed, militants fired 40 mortars and 8 rockets at Israel, and the Israeli Defence Forces conducted 13 air strikes on targets in the Gaza Strip. Tragically, a Palestinian woman was killed by shrapnel and several others were wounded. Those incidents of recent weeks underscore the fragility of the security dynamics on the ground, particularly the threat to the ceasefire in Gaza, which needs to be vigorously upheld by all sides if we are to avoid slipping into another devastating conflict.

Against that backdrop, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of the International Assistance to Palestinians (AHLC) met in Brussels on 19 April and expressed concern over the damaging consequences of the current political impasse, the importance of preserving the two-State solution and the sharp decline in donor aid to the Palestinian Authority. I am encouraged that both sides agreed to work with donors during the next two years to build a more sustainable Palestinian economy by reducing the

budget deficit and stimulating long-term economic growth.

As Palestinians face mounting financial and institutional challenges, negative developments continue in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials on security arrangements for Area A have all but reached an impasse. I urge both sides to continue to work to bridge existing gaps. It is important to strengthen the capacity, capability and authority of the Palestinian security forces in the areas under their responsibility. Continued security coordination between both sides has played, and continues to play, a key part in reducing violence. In that context, I welcome the announcement by Israeli authorities to facilitate access through a number of West Bank checkpoints. I encourage them to make further efforts to ease movement between communities within the West Bank, including to East Jerusalem.

I take this opportunity to note the continuation of demolitions of Palestinian structures in the West Bank. While the pace has somewhat slowed as compared to the past month, the number of structures that have been demolished across the West Bank in 2016 exceeds the total for all of 2015. At least 900 people have been displaced. Although many of the structures that have been demolished are not dwellings, the loss of water wells, solar panels and animal shelters has impacted the livelihoods of more than 2,500 people.

Allow me to turn now to Gaza, where the situation continues to be desperate and highly volatile. We in the international community have a responsibility not to fail the Palestinians in Gaza. We have a responsibility to help them recover from the physical and emotional traumas of war. We have a responsibility to assist them in rebuilding their lives and livelihoods and,

ultimately, to see Gaza and the West Bank reunited and the closures lifted.

In early April, Israel suspended the private import of cement following the diversion of a substantial amount from its intended legitimate beneficiaries. After 45 days and intensive efforts by the United Nations team on the ground, that suspension has been lifted. I highly appreciate the constructive work by all authorities to successfully address the situation. All sides need to ensure that cement is used for civilian purposes only. Individuals or groups seeking to benefit from the deviation of construction materials — for corruption, for building tunnels or other reasons — must understand that they selfishly compound the suffering of their own people and sow the seeds of further violence.

Reconstruction is a lifeline for the people of Gaza. However, Gaza's chronic energy and water crisis needs to be tackled without delay. Today, residents receive at most 8 to 12 hours of electricity. On 6 May the crisis turned to tragedy, as three children from the Al-Hindi family burned to death when their house in Gaza City caught fire from a candle lit during a power cut. It is deeply regrettable that some political factions have sought to use the tragedy to trade accusations and score points, instead of uniting to address the energy crisis.

Gaza's hardships seem to have no limits. Palestinians in Gaza are growing ever more desperate as they see their prospects for living normal lives and recovering their economy blocked by Hamas's military build-up, by Israel's security measures and closures, by the lack of Palestinian unity and the insufficient fulfilment of aid pledges by donors. Recent events clearly demonstrate that the spectre of violence looms ominously over the territory. Unless radically more is done to address the chronic realities in Gaza, it is not a question of if, but rather of when,

another escalation will take place. I once again encourage donors to fulfil their commitments to support Gaza's reconstruction, recovery and development.

I welcome the recent opening by Egyptian authorities of the Rafah border crossing on 11 and 12 May, during which just over 2,000 Palestinians entered and exited. I encourage Egypt to explore ways to facilitate more frequent openings of the crossing, particularly for humanitarian cases, while respecting its legitimate and pressing security concerns in the Sinai.

I want to briefly turn to an extremely worrying most recent development, that is, the announcement by Hamas of its intention to implement a number of death sentences. International law limits the application of the death penalty to the most serious crimes and pursuant to a trial and appeals process that scrupulously follows fair-trial standards. I have serious doubts as to whether capital trials in Gaza meet those standards. There are also disturbing media reports indicating that the sentences could be carried out in public. That raises even more alarms, as public executions are prohibited under international humanitarian law. What is also concerning is that the executions will be implemented without the approval of the Palestinian President, which is required under Palestinian law. Palestine is one, and Gaza and the West Bank are its two integral parts. I urge Hamas not to carry out those executions, and I call on President Abbas to establish a moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty.

As circumstances on the ground continue to deteriorate, for many lamenting the disappearance of a negotiated two-State solution has become the default narrative. And yet, according to a recent study conducted by Tel Aviv University, close to 60 per cent of the Jewish population and over 70 per cent of Palestinians remain in favour of conducting peace negotiations. The will to

advance towards peace clearly exists. What remains glaringly absent is the political will and bold leadership to make genuine progress a reality. We need collectively to ask ourselves whether those Israelis and Palestinians who today support the return to negotiations will continue to do so next year or two years from now if the prospects for peace remain out of reach. Prolonging the current impasse will sap any remaining optimism for finding a solution to the nearly 50-year occupation.

...

In conclusion, let me welcome the recent statement by Egyptian President Al Sisi expressing Egypt's readiness to mediate a reconciliation between rival Palestinian factions so as to pave the way

towards a lasting peace agreement with Israel. Also, his call to Israelis and Palestinians to continue the historic step towards peace taken by Israel and Egypt 37 years ago must not go unheeded — not in Israel, not in Palestine and certainly not in the rest of the Arab world. I urge Palestinian leaders in Gaza and the West Bank to take up that opportunity and to deliver, at long last, to the Palestinian people an end to the issues that divide and a commitment to strengthen the ties that bind them. I also urge Palestinian and Israeli leaders to engage, through the initiatives put forward, to bring a just, comprehensive and enduring peace to the people of Israel and Palestine.

...

XII. SPOKESPERSON FOR THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE POSSIBLE IMMINENT EXECUTIONS IN GAZA

The following [statement](#) was issued on 25 May, 2016 by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on imminent executions in Gaza:

“We are deeply concerned about recent statements made by the authorities in Gaza, including the Attorney General, of their intention to implement a number of death sentences, and fear that the first executions may be imminent. The Gaza authorities’ statements follow the demands of several families for the death penalty to be carried out against individuals accused of killing their relatives.

Death sentences may only be carried out in extremely limited circumstances, and pursuant to a trial and appeals that scrupulously follow fair trial standards. We have serious doubts as to whether capital trials in Gaza meet these standards. We are also concerned about reports indicating that these executions will be implemented without the approval of the

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, which is required under Palestinian law.

Media reports indicating that the sentences could be carried out in public also raise alarm, as this is a practice which is prohibited under international human rights law.

We urge the authorities in Gaza to uphold their obligations to respect the rights to life and to a fair trial - which are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the State of Palestine is a party - and not carry out these executions. We also urge the Palestinian President to establish a moratorium on executions in line with the strong international trend towards ending the use of the death penalty.”

XIII. ILO SUBMITS REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF WORKERS OF THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

On 30 May, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Guy Ryder, submitted a report entitled “The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories” to the 105th session of the International Labour Conference. The following are the concluding observations contained in the report ([ILC.105/DG/APP](#)):

121. For all practical purposes, the peace process has stopped. A framework is needed to reanimate the negotiations for a two-state solution. A continuation of the peace process is a precondition for job and wealth creation, decent work and social justice for all.

122. Constraints arising from the occupation and separation hamper economic and employment growth prospects. Palestinian economic activity and employment require the full use of land, resources and material inputs in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The main obstacle to this is the inability to develop Area C. The Palestinians need unhindered access to internal and international markets.

123. The increase in violence and retaliatory measures in the West Bank has exacerbated the hardship for Palestinian working women and men, whose rights are being further restricted and violated. A tense and volatile situation needs to be defused through mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation.

124. Greater access for Palestinians to work in the Israeli economy is providing some relief in the West Bank, but it is no substitute for permitting the development of the Palestinian economic base. Opportunities in the Israeli labour market, especially in the

settlements, carry a growing risk of exploitation, abuse by brokers and violations of fundamental rights at work.

125. Economic and employment growth in Gaza has taken place, but from a very low base, and is now driven solely by the reconstruction effort. Conditions have to be created for rebuilding the productive sectors, which have been decimated by three wars and eight years of siege. Overcoming the Palestinian divide through negotiations is essential for the rebuilding of Gaza to make substantial progress.

126. Palestinian institutions and labour governance continue to be strengthened. The new Law on Social Security should provide protection for private sector workers and encourage employment in this sector. Other initiatives, such as the labour and trade union laws, need to be brought to fruition. The full potential of tripartite cooperation needs to be used for the state-building process. Moreover, significant growth and job creation are possible only if women are better included in economic life.

127. The Syrian citizens of the occupied Syrian Golan are also subject to constraints arising out of occupation, and the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is further limiting their economic and employment options.

XIV. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISRAELI SUPPORT FOR THE ARAB PEACE INITIATIVE

The following [statement](#) was issued on 31 May, 2016 by Nickolay Mladenov, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, on statements by the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Liberman on the Arab Peace Initiative:

“I welcome yesterday’s statements by the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Liberman on the [Arab Peace Initiative](#) (API). This can help advance negotiations on achieving a two-state solution. It follows the call by the President of Egypt to Israelis and Palestinians to continue the historic step toward peace taken by Israel and Egypt 37 years ago.

The Middle East Quartet has repeatedly emphasized the significance and importance of the API with its vision for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict and as an opportunity for building a regional security framework.

This opportunity should not be missed and must be followed up with concrete and timely action.