



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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## **I. UNCTAD ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED TURMOIL IN PALESTINIAN ECONOMY**

*On 1 September 2016, the Secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) launched a report on UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people and developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The following is the Executive Summary of the report ([UNCTAD/APP2016/1](#)):*

In 2015, Israel withheld Palestinian fiscal revenue for four months, donor aid declined and Israeli settlements continued to expand into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, while poverty and unemployment remained high. The Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to be a captive market for exports from Israel, while occupation neutralized the potential development impact of donor aid. Genuine reconstruction has yet to take off in the Gaza Strip despite \$3.5 billion in donor pledges. Gaza's socioeconomic conditions worsened and the infant mortality rate increased for the first time in 50 years.

Occupation imposes a heavy cost on the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which might

otherwise reach twice its current size. Yet, to date, attempts to estimate the economic cost of occupation remain partial and ad hoc. There is a need to establish a systematic, comprehensive and sustainable framework within the United Nations system to report to the General Assembly, as requested in its resolutions [69/20](#) and [70/12](#). Despite limited resources, UNCTAD continues to deliver technical cooperation, training and advisory services to the Palestinian people. While funding from Qatar will allow UNCTAD to maintain a third professional post in the Assistance to the Palestinian People Unit for 18 months, additional resources are needed for long-term retention of the post and the implementation of unfunded projects.

## **II. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR WELCOMES ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES**

*On 14 September 2016, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#) on the electricity agreement reached by Israeli and Palestinian authorities:*

“I welcome the agreement reached by Israeli and Palestinian authorities to resolve the issue of the outstanding electricity debts and to create a new energy market. The agreement includes the transfer of authority to the Palestinian government for collecting payments for electricity distributed to Palestinian territory and will provide an important increase to the Palestinian revenue base.

Such a significant step is in line with the [Quartet's recommendations](#) calling on

both sides to take steps to strengthen Palestinian institutions and develop a sustainable economy, consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority as contemplated by prior agreements.

I congratulate and commend both sides for their efforts and encourage them to carry on in that positive path. Such steps, echoing the intentions of Oslo, are critical to the viability of a future Palestinian state.”

### **III. UNSCO REPORT TO THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE OUTLINES CONSTRAINTS TO PALESTINIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*On 14 September 2016, the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process issued a report to be presented at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on 19 September 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The following is the Executive Summary of the [report](#):*

Looking back at progress since the landmark AHLC meeting in 2011, the key constraints to greater Palestinian socio-economic development and effective functioning of institutions arise primarily from the persistence of the occupation and the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Freedom of movement, access to natural resources, to financial capital, to water and energy all hinge on the occupying power. This dependency, along with the Palestinian internal political divide and still maturing institutions, deprives the Palestinian Government of the ability to extend its authority to areas outside its reach, and of key attributes to deliver adequate services to its people.

The illicit arms buildup and militant activity by Hamas, the lack of control of Gaza by the Palestinian Government, and the dire humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the highly restrictive closure regime, feed instability, damage Gaza's economic development, and hinder basic service delivery.

Palestinian development is also constrained by complex physical and administrative restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which Israel justifies as necessary for its security, including of settlements. Access constraints between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank persist, affecting social, economic and development linkages. Such restrictions add costs to importers and exporters, limit access to natural resources and agricultural land, and discourage private sector investment. Against this backdrop and since the last meeting of the AHLC, the Palestinian Government has identified ten key priority

areas for the next six-year period which focus efforts toward a “Path to Independence”. While the supporting sector strategies and costing of this National Policy Agenda (NPA) are yet to be completed, this meeting of the AHLC provides an opportunity to reflect on recent developments as well as to review progress achieved in strengthening key Palestinian Government institutions and functions. Positive steps have been taken by the Palestinian Government in the areas of Governance, Rule of Law, Education, Health, Culture, Agriculture and Infrastructure Development. Equitable socio-economic development cannot be fully realized in any of these areas, however, without the facilitation of Israel. It is equally critical that the Palestinian Government continues to receive financial support from the international community, including budget support, development assistance and humanitarian aid.

Ultimately, what is needed to advance Palestinian development is a political horizon for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of a two-state solution. The reporting period has seen very limited progress in this regard. Despite efforts by the international community, the parties have not taken any meaningful steps to create an enabling environment for a return to meaningful negotiations. Both parties should comply with their basic commitments under existing agreements. Important progress can be made now towards advancing the two-state solution on the ground. There continues to be an urgent need for affirmative steps to reverse the negative trends on the ground in order to prevent entrenching a one-state reality of perpetual

occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

As called for by the Middle East Quartet, a number of important steps should be taken immediately. Both sides must work to de-escalate tensions by exercising restraint and refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric. Israel must end its settlement related policies in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It should implement positive and significant policy shifts, including transfer- ring powers and responsibilities in Area C, consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements.

Progress in the areas of housing, water, energy, communications, agriculture, and natural resources, along with significantly easing Palestinian movement restrictions, can be made while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs. The Palestinian Government should strengthen institutions, improve governance, and develop a sustainable economy. Gaza and the West Bank should be reunified under a single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian government on the basis of the PLO platform and the rule of law. Israel should accelerate the lifting of movement and access restrictions to and from Gaza, with due consideration of its need to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks.

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

*On 15 September 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The following are excerpts of the briefing ([S/PV.7772](#)):*

...

Twenty-three years ago, almost to the day, the first Oslo Accord was signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Unfortunately, we are further than ever from its goals. The two-State solution is at risk of being replaced by a one-State reality of perpetual violence and occupation. Despite warnings by the international community and the region, leaders on both sides have failed to take the difficult steps needed for peace.

Just yesterday, militants in Gaza fired yet another rocket into Israel, which I condemn. Israel fired four missiles at targets in Gaza in response. Once again, I reiterate that such attacks and the response they elicit do not serve the cause of peace. In the past two weeks alone, plans have been advanced for yet another 463 housing units in four settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank. Official Israeli data

shows that the second quarter of 2016 had the highest number of construction starts in three years. The decades-long policy that has settled more than 500,000 Israelis in Palestinian territory is diametrically opposed to the creation of a Palestinian State.

Regrettably, the reporting period also saw the continuation of statements by both sides that only perpetuate an environment of mistrust. I am disturbed by a recent statement by Israel's Prime Minister portraying those who oppose settlement expansion as supporters of ethnic cleansing. This is unacceptable and outrageous. Let me be absolutely clear — settlements are illegal under international law. The occupation, stifling and oppressive, must end. The international community, including the Security Council and the Middle East Quartet, universally views the expansion of settlements as an obstacle to peace.

I continue to be appalled that Palestinian parties choose to praise despicable acts, such as the 1972 terrorist attack against Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. The glorification of terror is disgraceful and the Palestinian leadership must put an end to it.

As Palestinians prepare for the first local elections in over 10 years, we see increasing threats to the electoral process and the credibility of elected institutions, including politically motivated attacks and a growing number of questionable rulings. I am particularly concerned by last week's decision of the Palestinian High Court to suspend all preparations while deliberations continue on a petition to cancel elections. Local elections in the West Bank and Gaza, if held in line with international standards, could provide an important renewal of Palestinian democracy and a first step towards advancing national unity. Regional efforts to encourage reconciliation and strengthen moderate political forces can also play a positive role.

Turning to Gaza, there has been progress in the two years since the 2014 ceasefire. Houses, hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure have been repaired thanks to generous donors and good cooperation among Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations. At the same time, 65,000 people remain displaced. More assistance is needed to rebuild nearly 5,000 destroyed houses. More coordination is required to accelerate ongoing reconstruction. Since 2014, the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#) has facilitated the entry of more than 1.5 million tons of construction material and helped significantly to boost imports into Gaza, positively impacting the private sector.

Israel has legitimate security concerns with regard to the smuggling or seizure of materials. Nevertheless, the mechanism is closely monitored and all sides continue to

ensure that appropriate controls are in place for aid to reach its intended recipients. I encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to continue their cooperation with the United Nations and facilitate the import of reconstruction materials that are so vital to rebuilding people's lives, while ensuring that materials are not diverted for military use.

Apart from reconstruction, Gaza's humanitarian needs run deep. More than 1.3 million of its 1.9 million people need of assistance. Continued humanitarian access and funding services to the Palestinian population in Gaza remain critical. In this dire context, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to face serious financial challenges. I appeal to Member States for their generosity to ensure that UNRWA can carry out its activities effectively and in a predictable manner.

Looking at the broader situation, Gaza remains under closures and is a ticking time bomb. Instability and the risk of violent escalation are ever-present. The continued arms build-up and militant activities of Hamas and other radical groups keep both sides of the border in a state of constant alert. The continued humanitarian deprivations of Gaza's nearly 2 million residents smother dreams and ambitions, and feed instability and extremism.

The corrosive Palestinian political divide worsens the humanitarian situation and stifles development, and the absence of a Government of national unity, espousing the principles upon which to build peace, inhibits the realization of an end to the occupation and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State. In its July report ([S/2016/595, annex](#)), the Quartet highlighted these complex political, security and socioeconomic dynamics in Gaza as one of the negative trends severely undermining



hopes for peace. Lasting progress in Gaza can be realized only on the basis of Palestinian unity, an end to the illicit arms build-up and militant activities, and a full lifting of movement and access restrictions in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

Turning to the Golan, I remain concerned by the continued breaches of the ceasefire line and by fighting in the areas of separation and limitation. These developments undermine the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and jeopardize the ceasefire between Israel and Syria. In particular, recent fire from the Syrian Arab Armed Forces impacted the Israeli-occupied Golan. On both occasions, the Israel Defense Forces responded with an airstrike. I call on Israel and Syria to abide by the terms of the Disengagement Agreement and exercise maximum restraint.

In a matter of days, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians will meet here in New York. I encourage both sides to focus on positive policy shifts, consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority in Area C, contemplated by prior agreements. To this end, I welcome the parties' recent

agreement on outstanding electricity debts and the creation of a new energy market, which will transfer authority to the Palestinian Government for the management of energy infrastructure. Such steps, echoing the intentions of Oslo, are critical to the viability of a future Palestinian State.

At the same time, international stakeholders must continue to work towards a negotiated end to the occupation, now entering its 50th year, and the establishment of a viable, democratic Palestine living in peace with Israel, each respecting the other's historic and religious connections to this holy land. Building on its report, the Quartet will continue its role to promote consensus to that end.

I wish to thank my Special Coordinator, Nickolay Mladenov, for his unwavering commitment and continued engagement with the parties in what remains a challenging context. For the sake of regional and indeed global peace, we must intensify our efforts to encourage the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to take the difficult steps to change the destructive trajectory currently leading us towards a one-State reality.

## **V. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER VIOLENCE IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM**

*On 19 September 2016, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov issued the following [statement](#) on recent violence in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem:*

“I am disturbed by the recent violence over the past week. During this latest upsurge in attacks in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, at least six Israelis were injured. Five Palestinians and one Jordanian national were killed while carrying out or allegedly carrying out attacks.

I reiterate the United Nations position that there can be no justification for terror and violence. I call upon authorities on both sides to take measures to preserve calm and avoid escalation, especially during the upcoming period of the Jewish High Holy Days.”

## VI. UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSES THE AD HOC LIAISON COMMITTEE

*On 19 September 2016, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made the following remarks at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee at United Nations Headquarters in New York (SG/SM/18090):*

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, delivered by Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs, to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, in New York today:

I thank all the members of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for their engagement. I am also grateful to Norway for chairing this important forum. This meeting has taken place every year during my tenure as Secretary-General. Looking back on that period, I regret that we face a situation where the realization of the hopes and dreams of Palestinians and Israelis alike seems more distant than ever.

As we enter the fiftieth year of occupation, we face a scenario where the very viability of the two-State solution is in peril. To build an independent Palestinian State, it is critical that the contiguity of the West Bank is preserved and that every effort is made to bolster the economy. There are legitimate fears that Area C is being slowly annexed by Israel. Settlements continue to be built. Palestinian access to land continues to be hampered. Area C is essential to accommodate the Palestinian population and to enable the development of a dynamic Palestinian private sector.

In East Jerusalem, there is a need to revitalize the economy while strengthening the delivery of services. In Gaza, two years have passed since the ceasefire that ended the most devastating hostilities since the beginning of the occupation. Significant progress has been made in rebuilding homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

However, as I have seen for myself on the ground, people are still struggling. That includes the 65,000 people whose homes have yet to be rebuilt and hundreds of thousands of people who do not have access to basic services. Without renewed economic investment and sincere efforts to enable trade, Palestinians in Gaza will remain locked in a vicious cycle of poverty, despair and isolation.

Reuniting Palestinians under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) platform and Quartet principles remains a priority. I continue to call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) in all its elements to achieve lasting progress, for building on a full calm and for the lifting of the closure.

The acute financial situation of the Palestinian Authority presents a serious additional risk. Without the support of the international community the consequences may prove widely destabilizing. Continued support to the Palestinian Authority, including budget support, and the alignment of programming behind Palestinian national priorities is essential to sustain its State-building achievements.

I hope today's meeting will point the way towards increased Palestinian and Israeli economic cooperation, an easing of restrictions on access and movement of Palestinians, and tangible improvements in both the West Bank and Gaza. Such positive measures would be mutually reinforcing and result in concrete benefits on the ground and foster badly needed trust.

We must all continue to show the determination necessary to keep working on a shared agenda. In that spirit, the United Nations will continue to help create and support those who work towards the goal of a better socioeconomic environment for the Palestinian people, and to drive forward the process of building a Palestinian State. By the end of this year, yet another timeline for reaching a negotiated solution will have lapsed and we must recognize that the window for achieving it is closing fast.

The establishment of a viable, democratic and sovereign State of Palestine living side by side with Israel is long overdue. Either we move forward, towards two States living in peace and security, or backwards towards renewed conflict, deeper despair, isolation and long-term insecurity and suffering for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Thank you again for your support.

## **VII. MIDDLE EAST QUARTET REITERATES CALL TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JULY 2016 QUARTET REPORT**

*On 23 September 2016, the Middle East Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union) issued the following statement ([SG/2232](#)):*

Representatives of the Quartet — United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, United States Secretary of State John Kerry and European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini — met in New York on 23 September.

The Quartet principals were joined by the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and France during the second part of the meeting to brief on their work to support Middle East peace. All agreed on the importance of close and continuing coordination of all efforts to achieve the common goal of the two-State solution.

The Quartet reiterated its call on the parties to implement the recommendations of the [Quartet Report](#) of 1 July 2016 and create the conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations that will end the occupation that began in 1967 and resolve all final status issues.

The Quartet recalled its findings from the Quartet Report and expressed concern about recent actions on the ground that run counter to its recommendations. In particular:

- The Quartet emphasized its strong opposition to ongoing settlement activity, which is an obstacle to peace, and expressed its grave concern that the acceleration of settlement construction and expansion in Area C and East Jerusalem, including the retroactive “legalization” of existing units, and the continued high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures, are steadily eroding the viability of the two-State solution.

- The Quartet expressed serious concern for the continuing dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by the closures of the crossings, as well as for the illicit arms build-up and activity by militant Palestinian groups, including rockets fired towards Israel, which increase the risk of renewed conflict. In addition, advancing Palestinian national unity on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) platform and Quartet principles remains a priority.

- The Quartet condemned the recent resurgence of violence and called on all sides to take all necessary steps to de-escalate tensions by exercising restraint, preventing incitement, refraining from



provocative actions and rhetoric and protecting the lives and property of all civilians.

The Quartet stressed the growing urgency of taking affirmative steps to reverse these trends in order to prevent entrenching a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

The Quartet acknowledged certain practical steps and agreements by Israel and the Palestinian Authority that could improve conditions for the Palestinian people, while stressing the importance of full and timely implementation. The Quartet also noted the importance of a political horizon and reiterated its call for significant policy shifts consistent with the

transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements and called for in the Quartet Report.

The Quartet underlined its commitment to achieving a negotiated, comprehensive, just and enduring resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions [242](#) (1967) and [338](#) (1973).

The Quartet expressed appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator. It directed the Quartet envoys to continue engaging with the parties and key stakeholders and to keep the principals apprised on implementation of the report's recommendations.

